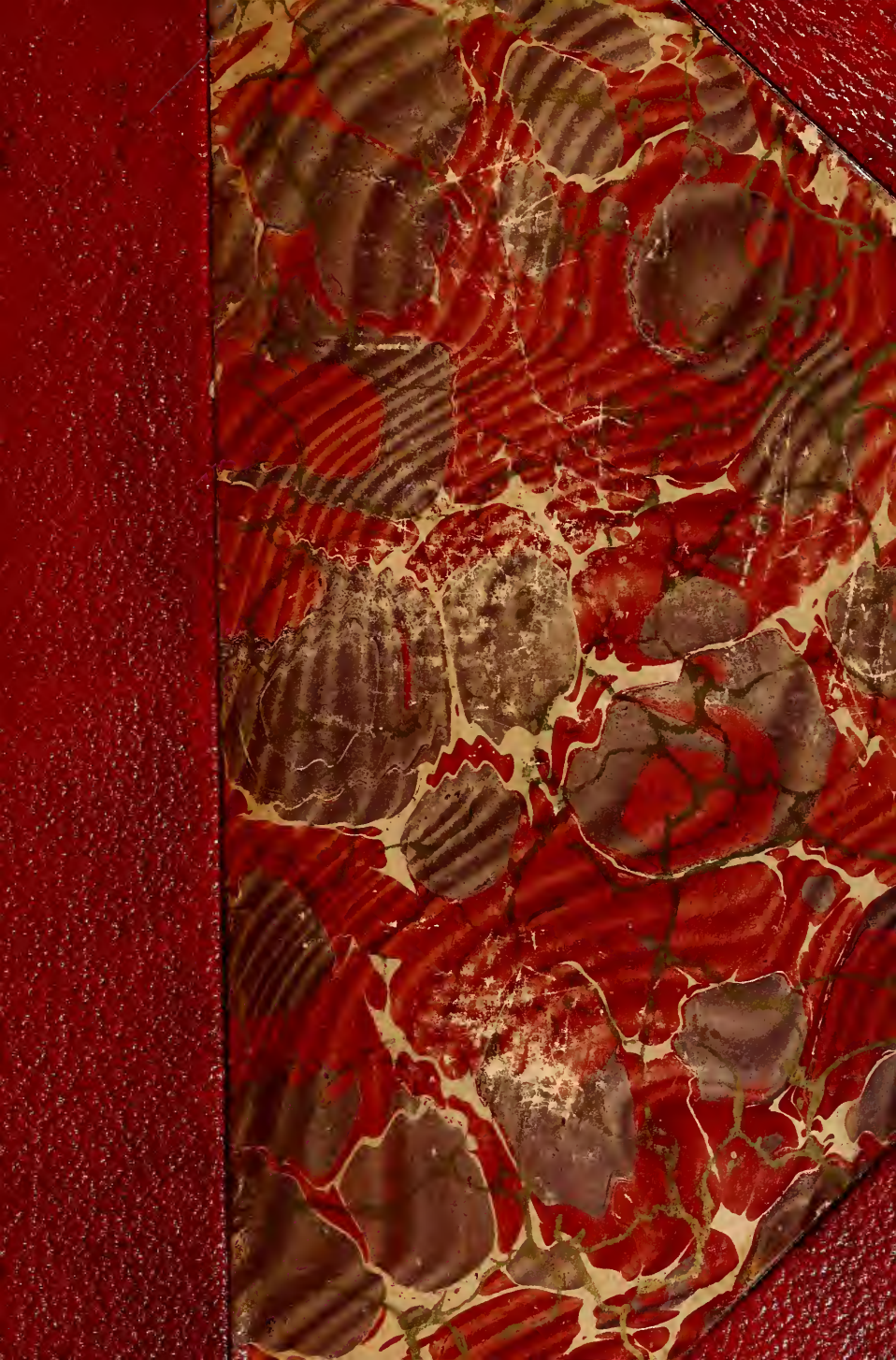

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VOLUME I.

"*I shall never love any one else in the same way.*"

Page 57.

THE PRIME MINISTER

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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VOLUME I.

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THE PRIME MINISTER.

CHAPTER I.

FERDINAND LOPEZ.

It is certainly of service to a man to know who were his grandfathers and who were his grandmothers if he entertain an ambition to move in the upper circles of society, and also of service to be able to speak of them as of persons who were themselves somebodies in their time. No doubt we all entertain great respect for those who by their own energies have raised themselves in the world; and when we hear that the son of a washerwoman has become Lord Chancellor or Archbishop of Canterbury we do, theoretically and abstractedly, feel a higher reverence for such self-made magnate than for one who has been as it were born into forensic or ecclesiastical purple. But not the less must the offspring of the washerwoman have had very much trouble on the subject of his birth, unless he has been, when young as well as when old, a very great man indeed. After the goal has been absolutely reached, and the honour and the titles and the wealth actually won, a man may talk with some humour, even

with some affection, of the maternal tub;—but while the struggle is going on, with the conviction strong upon the struggler that he cannot be altogether successful unless he be esteemed a gentleman, not to be ashamed, not to conceal the old family circumstances, not at any rate to be silent, is difficult. And the difficulty is certainly not less if fortunate circumstances rather than hard work and intrinsic merit have raised above his natural place an aspirant to high social position. Can it be expected that such a one when dining with a duchess shall speak of his father's small shop, or bring into the light of day his grandfather's cobbler's awl? And yet it is so difficult to be altogether silent! It may not be necessary for any of us to be always talking of our own parentage. We may be generally reticent as to our uncles and aunts, and may drop even our brothers and sisters in our ordinary conversation. But if a man never mentions his belongings among those with whom he lives, he becomes mysterious, and almost open to suspicion. It begins to be known that nobody knows anything of such a man, and even friends become afraid. It is certainly convenient to be able to allude, if it be but once in a year, to some blood relation.

Ferdinand Lopez, who in other respects had much in his circumstances on which to congratulate himself, suffered trouble in his mind respecting his ancestors such as I have endeavoured to describe. He did not know very much himself, but what little he did know he kept altogether to himself. He had no father or mother, no uncle, aunt, brother or sister, no cousin even whom he could mention in a cursory way to his dearest friend. He suffered, no doubt;—but with

Spartan consistency he so hid his trouble from the world that no one knew that he suffered. Those with whom he lived, and who speculated often and wondered much as to who he was, never dreamed that the silent man's reticence was a burden to himself. At no special conjuncture of his life, at no period which could be marked with the finger of the observer, did he glaringly abstain from any statement which at the moment might be natural. He never hesitated, blushed, or palpably laboured at concealment; but the fact remained that though a great many men and not a few women knew Ferdinand Lopez very well, none of them knew whence he had come, or what was his family.

He was a man, however, naturally reticent, who never alluded to his own affairs unless in pursuit of some object the way to which was clear before his eyes. Silence therefore on a matter which is common in the mouths of most men was less difficult to him than to another, and the result less embarrassing. Dear old Jones, who tells his friends at the club of every pound that he loses or wins at the races, who boasts of Mary's favours and mourns over Lucy's coldness almost in public, who issues bulletins on the state of his purse, his stomach, his stable, and his debts, could not with any amount of care keep from us the fact that his father was an attorney's clerk, and made his first money by discounting small bills. Everybody knows it, and Jones, who likes popularity, grieves at the unfortunate publicity. But Jones is relieved from a burden which would have broken his poor shoulders, and which even Ferdinand Lopez, who is a strong man, often finds it hard to bear without wincing.

It was admitted on all sides that Ferdinand Lopez

was a "gentleman." Johnson says that any other derivation of this difficult word than that which causes it to signify "a man of ancestry" is whimsical. There are many, who in defining the term for their own use, still adhere to Johnson's dictum;—but they adhere to it with certain unexpressed allowances for possible exceptions. The chances are very much in favour of the well-born man, but exceptions may exist. It was not generally believed that Ferdinand Lopez was well born;—but he was a gentleman. And this most precious rank was acceded to him although he was employed,—or at least had been employed,—on business which does not of itself give such a warrant of position as is supposed to be afforded by the bar and the church, by the military services and by physic. He had been on the Stock Exchange, and still in some manner, not clearly understood by his friends, did business in the City.

At the time with which we are now concerned Ferdinand Lopez was thirty-three years old, and as he had begun life early he had been long before the world. It was known of him that he had been at a good English private school, and it was reported, on the solitary evidence of one who had there been his schoolfellow, that a rumour was current in the school that his school bills were paid by an old gentleman who was not related to him. Thence at the age of seventeen he had been sent to a German University, and at the age of twenty-one had appeared in London, in a stockbroker's office, where he was soon known as an accomplished linguist, and as a very clever fellow,—precocious, not given to many pleasures, apt for work, but hardly trustworthy by employers, not as being dishonest,

but as having a taste for being a master rather than a servant. Indeed his period of servitude was very short. It was not in his nature to be active on behalf of others. He was soon active for himself, and at one time it was supposed that he was making a fortune. Then it was known that he had left his regular business, and it was supposed that he had lost all that he had ever made or had ever possessed. But nobody, not even his own bankers or his own lawyer,—not even the old woman who looked after his linen,—ever really knew the state of his affairs.

He was certainly a handsome man,—his beauty being of a sort which men are apt to deny and women to admit lavishly. He was nearly six feet tall, very dark, and very thin, with regular, well-cut features indicating little to the physiognomist unless it be the great gift of self-possession. His hair was cut short, and he wore no beard beyond an absolutely black moustache. His teeth were perfect in form and whiteness,—a characteristic which, though it may be a valued item in a general catalogue of personal attraction, does not generally recommend a man to the unconscious judgment of his acquaintance. But about the mouth and chin of this man there was a something of softness, perhaps in the play of the lips, perhaps in the dimple, which in some degree lessened the feeling of hardness which was produced by the square brow and bold, unflinching, combative eyes. They who knew him and liked him were reconciled by the lower face. The greater number who knew him and did not like him felt and resented,—even though in nine cases out of ten they might express no resentment even to themselves,—the pugnacity of his steady glance.

For he was essentially one of those men who are always, in the inner workings of their minds, defending themselves and attacking others. He could not give a penny to a woman at a crossing without a look which argued at full length her injustice in making her demand, and his freedom from all liability let him walk the crossing as often as he might. He could not seat himself in a railway carriage without a lesson to his opposite neighbour that in all the mutual affairs of travelling, arrangement of feet, disposition of bags, and opening of windows, it would be that neighbour's duty to submit and his to exact. It was, however, for the spirit rather than for the thing itself that he combated. The woman with the broom got her penny. The opposite gentleman when once by a glance he had expressed submission was allowed his own way with his legs and with the window. I would not say that Ferdinand Lopez was prone to do ill-natured things; but he was imperious, and he had learned to carry his empire in his eye.

The reader must submit to be told one or two further and still smaller details respecting the man, and then the man shall be allowed to make his own way. No one of those around him knew how much care he took to dress himself well, or how careful he was that no one should know it. His very tailor regarded him as being simply extravagant in the number of his coats and trousers, and his friends looked upon him as one of those fortunate beings to whose nature belongs a facility of being well dressed, or almost an impossibility of being ill dressed. We all know the man,—a little man generally who moves seldom and softly,—who looks always as though he had just been sent home in

a bandbox. Ferdinand Lopez was not a little man, and moved freely enough; but never, at any moment, —going into the City or coming out of it, on horseback or on foot, at home over his book or after the mazes of the dance,—was he dressed otherwise than with perfect care. Money and time did it, but folk thought that it grew with him, as did his hair and his nails. And he always rode a horse which charmed good judges of what a park nag should be;—not a prancing, restless, giggling, side-way-going, useless garran, but an animal well made, well bitted, with perfect paces, on whom a rider if it pleased him could be as quiet as a statue on a monument. It often did please Ferdinand Lopez to be quiet on horseback; and yet he did not look like a statue, for it was acknowledged through all London that he was a good horseman. He lived luxuriously too,—though whether at his ease or not nobody knew,—for he kept a brougham of his own, and during the hunting season he had two horses down at Leighton. There had once been a belief abroad that he was ruined, but they who interest themselves in such matters had found out,—or at any rate believed that they had found out,—that he paid his tailor regularly: and now there prevailed an opinion that Ferdinand Lopez was a monied man.

It was known to some few that he occupied rooms in a flat at Westminster,—but to very few exactly where the rooms were situate. Among all his friends no one was known to have entered them. In a moderate way he was given to hospitality,—that is to infrequent but, when the occasion came, to graceful hospitality. Some club, however, or tavern, or perhaps, in the summer, some river bank would be chosen

as the scene of these festivities. To a few,—if, as suggested, amidst summer flowers on the water's edge, to men and women mixed,—he would be a courtly and efficient host; for he had the rare gift of doing such things well.

Hunting was over, and the east wind was still blowing, and a great portion of the London world was out of town taking its Easter holiday, when, on an unpleasant morning, Ferdinand Lopez travelled into the City by the Metropolitan railway from Westminster Bridge. It was his custom to go thither when he did go,—not daily like a man of business, but as chance might require, like a capitalist or a man of pleasure,—in his own brougham. But on this occasion he walked down to the river side, and then walked from the Mansion House into a dingy little court called Little Tankard Yard, near the Bank of England, and going through a narrow dark long passage got into a little office at the back of a building, in which there sat at a desk a greasy gentleman with a new hat on one side of his head, who might perhaps be about forty years old. The place was very dark, and the man was turning over the leaves of a ledger. A stranger to City ways might probably have said that he was idle, but he was no doubt filling his mind with that erudition which would enable him to earn his bread. On the other side of the desk there was a little boy copying letters. These were Mr. Sextus Parker,—commonly called Sexty Parker,—and his clerk. Mr. Parker was a gentleman very well known and at the present moment favourably esteemed on the Stock Exchange. "What, Lopez!" said he. "Uncommon glad to see you. What can I do for you?"

"Just come inside,—will you?" said Lopez. Now within Mr. Parker's very small office there was a smaller office in which there were a safe, a small rickety Pembroke table, two chairs, and an old washing-stand with a tumbled towel. Lopez led the way into this sanctum as though he knew the place well, and Sexty Parker followed him.

"Beastly day, is n't it?" said Sexty.

"Yes,—a nasty east wind."

"Cutting one in two, with a hot sun at the same time. One ought to hybernate at this time of the year."

"Then why don't you hybernate?" said Lopez.

"Business is too good. That 's about it. A man has to stick to it when it does come. Everybody can't do like you;—give up regular work, and make a better thing of an hour now and an hour then, just as it pleases you. I should n't dare go in for that kind of thing."

"I don't suppose you or any one else know what I go in for," said Lopez, with a look that indicated offence.

"Nor don't care," said Sexty;—"only hope it 's something good for your sake." Sexty Parker had known Mr. Lopez well, now for some years, and being an overbearing man himself,—somewhat even of a bully if the truth be spoken,—and by no means apt to give way unless hard pressed, had often tried his "hand" on his friend, as he himself would have said. But I doubt whether he could remember any instance in which he could congratulate himself on success. He was trying his hand again now, but did it with a faltering voice, having caught a glance of his friend's eye.

"I dare say not," said Lopez. Then he continued without changing his voice or the nature of the glance of his eye, "I 'll tell you what I want you to do now. I want your name to this bill for three months."

Sexty Parker opened his mouth and his eyes, and took the bit of paper that was tendered to him. It was a promissory note for £750, which, if signed by him, would at the end of the specified period make him liable for that sum were it not otherwise paid. His friend Mr. Lopez was indeed applying to him for the assistance of his name in raising a loan to the amount of the sum named. This was a kind of favour which a man should ask almost on his knees,—and which, if so asked, Mr. Sextus Parker would certainly refuse. And here was Ferdinand Lopez asking it,—whom Sextus Parker had latterly regarded as an opulent man, —and asking it not at all on his knees, but, as one might say, at the muzzle of a pistol. "Accommodation bill!" said Sexty. "Why, you ain't hard up; are you?"

"I 'm not going just at present to tell you much about my affairs, and yet I expect you to do what I ask you. I don't suppose you doubt my ability to raise £750."

"Oh, dear no," said Sexty, who had been looked at and who had not borne the inspection well.

"And I don't suppose you would refuse me even if I were hard up as you call it." There had been affairs before between the two men in which Lopez had probably been the stronger, and the memory of them, added to the inspection which was still going on, was heavy upon poor Sexty.

"Oh, dear no;—I was n't thinking of refusing. I

suppose a fellow may be a little surprised at such a thing."

"I don't know why you need be surprised, as such things are very common. I happen to have taken a share in a loan a little beyond my immediate means, and therefore want a few hundreds. There is no one I can ask with a better grace than you. If you ain't —afraid about it, just sign it."

"Oh, I ain't afraid," said Sexty, taking his pen and writing his name across the bill. But even before the signature was finished, when his eye was taken away from the face of his companion and fixed upon the disagreeable piece of paper beneath his hand, he repented of what he was doing. He almost arrested his signature half-way. He did hesitate, but had not pluck enough to stop his hand. "It does seem to be a d——d odd transaction all the same," he said as he leaned back in his chair.

"It 's the commonest thing in the world," said Lopez, picking up the bill in a leisurely way, folding it and putting it into his pocket-book. "Have our names never been together on a bit of paper before?"

"When we both had something to make by it."

"You 've nothing to make and nothing to lose by this. Good day and many thanks;—though I don't think so much of the affair as you seem to do." Then Ferdinand Lopez took his departure and Sexty Parker was left alone in his bewilderment.

"By George,—that 's queer," he said to himself. "Who 'd have thought of Lopez being hard up for a few hundred pounds? But it must be all right. He would n't have come in that fashion, if it had n't been all right. I ought n't to have done it though! A man

ought never to do that kind of thing;—never,—never!" And Mr. Sextus Parker was much discontented with himself, so that when he got home that evening to the wife of his bosom and his little family at Ponders End, he by no means made himself agreeable to them. For that sum of £750 sat upon his bosom as he ate his supper, and lay upon his chest as he slept,—like a nightmare.

CHAPTER II.

EVERETT WHARTON.

On that same day Lopez dined with his friend Everett Wharton at a new club called the Progress, of which they were both members. The Progress was certainly a new club, having as yet been open hardly more than three years; but still it was old enough to have seen many of the hopes of its early youth become dim with age and inaction. For the Progress had intended to do great things for the liberal party,—or rather for political liberality in general,—and had in truth done little or nothing. It had been got up with considerable enthusiasm, and for a while certain fiery politicians had believed that through the instrumentality of this institution men of genius, and spirit, and natural power, but without wealth,—meaning always themselves,—would be supplied with sure seats in Parliament and a probable share in the Government. But no such results had been achieved. There had been a want of something,—some deficiency felt but not yet defined,—which had hitherto been fatal. The young men said it was because no old stager who knew the way of pulling the wires would come forward and put the club in the proper groove. The old men said it was because the young men were pretentious puppies. It was, however, not to be doubted that the party of Progress had become slack, and that the liberal poli-

ticians of the country, although a special new club had been opened for the furtherance of their views, were not at present making much way. "What we want is organization," said one of the leading young men. But the organization was not as yet forthcoming.

The club, nevertheless, went on its way, like other clubs, and men dined and smoked and played billiards and pretended to read. Some few energetic members still hoped that a good day would come in which their grand ideas might be realised,—but as regarded the members generally, they were content to eat and drink and play billiards. It was a fairly good club,—with a sprinkling of liberal lordlings, a couple of dozen of members of Parliament who had been made to believe that they would neglect their party duties unless they paid their money, and the usual assortment of barristers, attorneys, city merchants and idle men. It was good enough at any rate for Ferdinand Lopez, who was particular about his dinner, and had an opinion of his own about wines. He had been heard to assert that, for real quiet comfort, there was not a club in London equal to it; but his hearers were not aware that in past days he had been black-balled at the T——— and the G———. These were accidents which Lopez had a gift of keeping in the background. His present companion, Everett Wharton, had, as well as himself, been an original member;—and Wharton had been one of those who had hoped to find in the club a stepping-stone to high political life, and who now talked often with idle energy of the need of organization.

"For myself," said Lopez, "I can conceive no vainer object of ambition than a seat in the British Parlia-

ment. What does any man gain by it? The few who are successful work very hard for little pay and no thanks,—or nearly equally hard for no pay and as little thanks. The many who fail sit idly for hours, undergoing the weary task of listening to platitudes, and enjoy in return the now absolutely valueless privilege of having M.P. written on their letters."

"Somebody must make laws for the country."

"I don't see the necessity. I think the country would do uncommonly well if it were to know that no old law would be altered or new law made for the next twenty years."

"You would n't have repealed the corn laws?"

"There are no corn laws to repeal now."

"Nor modify the income tax?"

"I would modify nothing. But at any rate, whether laws are to be altered or to be left, it is a comfort to me that I need not put my finger into that pie. There is one benefit indeed in being in the House."

"You can't be arrested."

"Well;—that, as far as it goes; and one other. It assists a man in getting a seat as the director of certain Companies. People are still such asses that they trust a Board of Directors made up of members of Parliament, and therefore of course members are made welcome. But if you want to get into the House why don't you arrange it with your father, instead of waiting for what the club may do for you?"

"My father would n't pay a shilling for such a purpose. He was never in the House himself."

"And therefore despises it."

"A little of that, perhaps. No man ever worked harder than he did, or, in his way, more successfully;

and having seen one after another of his juniors become members of Parliament, while he stuck to the attorneys, there is perhaps a little jealousy about it."

"From what I see of the way you live at home, I should think your father would do anything for you,—with proper management. There is no doubt, I suppose, that he could afford it?"

"My father never in his life said anything to me about his own money affairs, though he says a great deal about mine. No man ever was closer than my father. But I believe that he could afford almost anything."

"I wish I had such a father," said Ferdinand Lopez. "I think that I should succeed in ascertaining the extent of his capabilities, and in making some use of them too."

Wharton nearly asked his friend,—almost summoned courage to ask him,—whether his father had done much for him. They were very intimate; and on one subject, in which Lopez was much interested, their confidence had been very close. But the younger and the weaker man of the two could not quite bring himself to the point of making an inquiry which he thought would be disagreeable. Lopez had never before, in all their intercourse, hinted at the possibility of his having or having had filial aspirations. He had been as though he had been created self-sufficient, independent of mother's milk or father's money. Now the question might have been asked almost naturally. But it was not asked.

Everett Wharton was a trouble to his father,—but not an agonizing trouble, as are some sons. His faults were not of a nature to rob his father's cup of all its

sweetness and to bring his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Old Wharton had never had to ask himself whether he should now, at length, let his son fall into the lowest abysses, or whether he should yet again struggle to put him on his legs, again forgive him, again pay his debts, again endeavour to forget dishonour, and place it all to the score of thoughtless youth. Had it been so, I think that, if not on the first or second fall, certainly on the third, the young man would have gone into the abyss; for Mr. Wharton was a stern man, and capable of coming to a clear conclusion on things that were nearest and even dearest to himself. But Everett Wharton had simply shown himself to be inefficient to earn his own bread. He had never declined even to do this,—but had simply been inefficient. He had not declared either by words or actions that as his father was a rich man, and as he was an only son, he would therefore do nothing. But he had tried his hand thrice, and in each case, after but short trial, had assured his father and his friends that the thing had not suited him. Leaving Oxford without a degree,—for the reading of the schools did not suit him,—he had gone into a banking-house, by no means as a mere clerk, but with an expressed proposition from his father, backed by the assent of a partner, that he should work his way up to wealth and a great commercial position. But six months taught him that banking was "an abomination," and he at once went into a course of reading with a barrister. He remained at this till he was called,—for a man may be called with very little continuous work. But after he was called the solitude of his chambers was too much for him, and at twenty-five he found

that the Stock Exchange was the mart in the world for such talents and energies as he possessed. What was the nature of his failure during the year that he went into the City, was known only to himself and his father,—unless Ferdinand Lopez knew something of it also. But at six-and-twenty the Stock Exchange was also abandoned; and now, at eight-and-twenty, Everett Wharton had discovered that a parliamentary career was that for which nature and his special genius had intended him. He had probably suggested this to his father, and had met with some cold rebuff.

Everett Wharton was a good-looking, manly fellow, six feet high, with broad shoulders, with light hair, wearing a large silky bushy beard, which made him look older than his years, who neither by his speech nor by his appearance would ever be taken for a fool, but who showed by the very actions of his body as well as by the play of his face, that he lacked firmness of purpose. He certainly was no fool. He had read much, and, though he generally forgot what he read, there were left with him from his readings certain nebulous lights begotten by other men's thinking which enabled him to talk on most subjects. It cannot be said of him that he did much thinking for himself;—but he thought that he thought. He believed of himself that he had gone rather deep into politics, and that he was entitled to call many statesmen asses because they did not see the things which he saw. He had the great question of labour, and all that refers to unions, strikes, and lock-outs, quite at his fingers' ends. He knew how the Church of England should be disestablished and recomposed. He was quite clear on questions of finance, and saw to a "t" how progress should be

made towards communism, so that no violence should disturb that progress, and that in the due course of centuries all desire for personal property should be conquered and annihilated by a philanthropy so general as hardly to be accounted a virtue. In the meantime he could never contrive to pay his tailor's bill regularly out of the allowance of £400 a year which his father made him, and was always dreaming of the comforts of a handsome income.

He was a popular man certainly,—very popular with women, to whom he was always courteous, and generally liked by men, to whom he was genial and good-natured. Though he was not himself aware of the fact, he was very dear to his father, who in his own silent way almost admired and certainly liked the openness and guileless freedom of a character which was very opposite to his own. The father, though he had never said a word to flatter the son, did in truth give his offspring credit for greater talent than he possessed, and, even when appearing to scorn them, would listen to the young man's diatribes almost with satisfaction. And Everett was very dear also to a sister, who was the only other living member of this branch of the Wharton family. Much will be said of her in these pages, and it is hoped that the reader may take an interest in her fate. But here, in speaking of the brother, it may suffice to say, that the sister, who was endowed with infinitely finer gifts than his, did give credit to the somewhat pretentious claims of her less noble brother.

Indeed it had been perhaps a misfortune with Everett Wharton that some people had believed in him,—and a further misfortune that some others had

thought it worth their while to pretend to believe in him. Among the latter might probably be reckoned the friend with whom he was now dining at the Progress. A man may flatter another, as Lopez occasionally did flatter Wharton, without preconcerted falsehood. It suits one man to be well with another, and the one learns gradually and perhaps unconsciously the way to take advantage of the foibles of the other. Now it was most material to Lopez that he should stand well with all the members of the Wharton family, as he aspired to the hand of the daughter of the house. Of her regard he already thought himself nearly sure. Of the father's sanction to such a marriage he had reason to be almost more than doubtful. But the brother was his friend,—and in such circumstances a man is almost justified in flattering a brother.

"I 'll tell you what it is, Lopez," said Wharton, as they strolled out of the club together, a little after ten o'clock, "the men of the present day won't give themselves the trouble to occupy their minds with matters which have, or should have, real interest. Pope knew all about it when he said that 'the proper study of mankind is man.' But people don't read Pope now, or if they do they don't take the trouble to understand him."

"Men are too busy making money, my dear fellow."

"That 's just it. Money 's a very nice thing."

"Very nice," said Lopez.

"But the search after it is debasing. If a man could make money for four, or six, or even eight hours a day, and then wash his mind of the pursuit, as a clerk in an office washes the copies and ledgers out of his mind, then——"

"He would never make money in that way,—and keep it."

"And therefore the whole thing is debasing. A man ceases to care for the great interests of the world, or even to be aware of their existence, when his whole soul is in Spanish bonds. They wanted to make a banker of me, but I found that it would kill me."

"It would kill me, I think, if I had to confine myself to Spanish bonds."

"You know what I mean. You at any rate can understand me, though I fear you are too far gone to abandon the idea of making a fortune."

"I would abandon it to-morrow if I could come into a fortune ready made. A man must at any rate eat."

"Yes;—he must eat. But I am not quite sure," said Wharton thoughtfully, "that he need think about what he eats."

"Unless the beef is sent up without horse-radish!" It had happened that when the two men sat down to their dinner the insufficient quantity of that vegetable supplied by the steward of the club had been all consumed, and Wharton had complained of the grievance.

"A man has a right to that for which he has paid," said Wharton, with mock solemnity, "and if he passes over laches of that nature without observation he does an injury to humanity at large. I 'm not going to be caught in a trap, you know, because I like horse-radish with my beef. Well, I can't go farther out of my way, as I have a deal of reading to do before I court my Morpheus. If you 'll take my advice you 'll go straight to the governor. Whatever Emily may feel I don't think she 'll say much to encourage you

unless you go about it after that fashion. She has prim notions of her own, which perhaps are not after all so much amiss when a man wants to marry a girl."

"God forbid that I should think that anything about your sister was amiss!"

"I don't think there is much myself. Women are generally superficial,—but some are honestly superficial and some dishonestly. Emily at any rate is honest."

"Stop half a moment." Then they sauntered arm in arm down the broad pavement leading from Pall Mall to the Duke of York's column. "I wish I could make out your father more clearly. He is always civil to me, but he has a cold way of looking at me which makes me think I am not in his good books."

"He is like that to everybody."

"I never seem to get beyond the skin with him. You must have heard him speak of me in my absence?"

"He never says very much about anybody."

"But a word would let me know how the land lies. You know me well enough to be aware that I am the last man to be curious as to what others think of me. Indeed I do not care about it as much as a man should do. I am utterly indifferent to the opinion of the world at large, and would never object to the company of a pleasant person because the pleasant person abused me behind my back. What I value is the pleasantness of the man and not his liking or disliking for myself. But here the dearest aim of my life is concerned, and I might be guided either this way or that, to my great advantage, by knowing whether I stand well or ill with him."

"You have dined three times within the last three months in Manchester Square, and I don't know any other man,—certainly no other young man,—who has had such strong proof of intimacy from my father."

"Yes, and I know my advantages. But I have been there as your friend, not as his."

"He does n't care twopence about my friends. I wanted to give Charlie Skate a dinner, but my father would n't have him at any price."

"Charlie Skate is out at elbows, and bets at billiards. I am respectable,—or at any rate your father thinks so. Your father is more anxious about you than you are aware of, and wishes to make his house pleasant to you as long as he can do so to your advantage. As far as you are concerned he rather approves of me, fancying that my turn for making money is stronger than my turn for spending it. Nevertheless, he looks upon me as a friend of yours rather than his own. Though he has given me three dinners in three months, —and I own the greatness of his hospitality,—I don't suppose he ever said a word in my favour. I wish I knew what he does say."

"He says he knows nothing about you."

"Oh;—that 's it, is it? Then he can know no harm. When next he says so ask him of how many of the men who dine at his house he can say as much. Good night;—I won't keep you any longer. But I can tell you this;—if between us we can manage to handle him rightly, you may get your seat in Parliament and I may get my wife;——that is, of course, if she will have me."

Then they parted, but Lopez remained in the pathway walking up and down by the side of the old

military club, thinking of things. He certainly knew his friend, the younger Wharton, intimately, appreciating the man's good qualities, and being fully aware of the man's weakness. By his questions he had extracted quite enough to assure himself that Emily's father would be adverse to his proposition. He had not felt much doubt before, but now he was certain. "He does n't know much about me," he said musing to himself. "Well, no; he does n't;—and there is n't very much that I can tell him. Of course he 's wise, —as wisdom goes. But then, wise men do do foolish things at intervals. The discreetest of city bankers are talked out of their money; the most scrupulous of matrons are talked out of their virtue; the most experienced of statesmen are talked out of their principles. And who can really calculate chances? Men who lead forlorn hopes generally push through without being wounded;—and the fifth or sixth heir comes to a title." So much he said, palpably, though to himself, with his inner voice. Then,—impalpably, with no even inner voice,—he asked himself what chance he might have of prevailing with the girl herself; and he almost ventured to tell himself that in that direction he need not despair.

In very truth he loved the girl and reverenced her, believing her to be better and higher and nobler than other human beings,—as a man does when he is in love; and so believing, he had those doubts as to his own success which such reverence produces.

CHAPTER III.

MR. ABEL WHARTON, Q.C.

Lopez was not a man to let grass grow under his feet when he had anything to do. When he was tired of walking backwards and forwards over the same bit of pavement, subject all the while to a cold east wind, he went home and thought of the same matter while he lay in bed. Even were he to get the girl's assurances of love, without the father's consent he might find himself farther from his object than ever. Mr. Wharton was a man of old fashions, who would think himself ill-used and his daughter ill-used, and who would think also that a general offence would have been committed against good social manners, if his daughter were to be asked for her hand without his previous consent. Should he absolutely refuse,—why then the battle, though it would be a desperate battle, might perhaps be fought with other strategy; but, giving to the matter his best consideration, Lopez thought it expedient to go at once to the father. In doing this he would have no silly tremors. Whatever he might feel in speaking to the girl, he had sufficient self-confidence to be able to ask the father, if not with assurance at any rate without trepidation. It was, he thought, probable that the father, at the first attack, would neither altogether accede, nor altogether refuse.

The disposition of the man was averse to the probability of an absolute reply at the first moment. The lover imagined that it might be possible for him to take advantage of the period of doubt which would thus be created.

Mr. Wharton was and had for a great many years been a barrister practising in the Equity Courts,—or rather in one Equity Court, for throughout a life's work now extending to nearly fifty years, he had hardly ever gone out of the single Vice-Chancellor's Court which was much better known by Mr. Wharton's name than by that of the less eminent judge who now sat there. His had been a very peculiar, a very toilsome, but yet probably a very satisfactory life. He had begun his practice early, and had worked in a stuff gown till he was nearly sixty. At that time he had amassed a large fortune, mainly from his profession, but partly also by the careful use of his own small patrimony and by his wife's money. Men knew that he was rich, but no one knew the extent of his wealth. When he submitted to take a silk gown, he declared among his friends that he did so as a step preparatory to his retirement. The altered method of work would not suit him at his age, nor,—as he said,—would it be profitable. He would take his silk as an honour for his declining years, so that he might become a bencher at his Inn. But he had now been working for the last twelve or fourteen years with his silk gown,—almost as hard as in younger days, and with pecuniary results almost as serviceable; and though from month to month he declared his intention of taking no fresh briefs, and though he did now occasionally refuse work, still he was there with his mind as clear as ever,

and with his body apparently as little affected by fatigue.

Mr. Wharton had not married till he was forty, and his wife had now been two years dead. He had had six children,—of whom but two were now left to make a household for his old age. He had been nearly fifty when his youngest daughter was born, and was therefore now an old father of a young child. But he was one of those men, as in youth they are never very young, so in age are they never very old. He could still ride his cob in the park jauntily; and did so carefully every morning in his life, after an early cup of tea and before his breakfast. And he could walk home from his chambers every day, and on Sundays could do the round of the parks on foot. Twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, he dined at that old law club, the Eldon, and played whist after dinner till twelve o'clock. This was the great dissipation and, I think, the chief charm of his life. In the middle of August he and his daughter usually went for a month to Wharton Hall in Herefordshire, the seat of his cousin Sir Alured Wharton;—and this was the one duty of his life which was a burthen to him. But he had been made to believe that it was essential to his health, and to his wife's, and then to his girl's health, that he should every summer leave town for a time,—and where else was he to go? Sir Alured was a relation and a gentleman. Emily liked Wharton Hall. It was the proper thing. He hated Wharton Hall, but then he did not know any place out of London that he would not hate worse. He had once been induced to go up the Rhine, but had never repeated the experiment of foreign travel. Emily sometimes went abroad with

her cousins, during which periods it was supposed that the old lawyer spent a good deal of his time at the Eldon. He was a spare, thin, strongly made man, with spare light brown hair, hardly yet grizzled, with small grey whiskers, clear eyes, bushy eyebrows, with a long ugly nose, on which young barristers had been heard to declare that you might hang a small kettle, and with considerable vehemence of talk when he was opposed in argument. For, with all his well-known coolness of temper, Mr. Wharton could become very hot in an argument, when the nature of the case in hand required heat. On one subject all who knew him were agreed. He was a thorough lawyer. Many doubted his eloquence, and some declared that he had known well the extent of his own powers in abstaining from seeking the higher honours of his profession; but no one doubted his law. He had once written a book,—on the mortgage of stocks in trade; but that had been in early life, and he had never since dabbled in literature.

He was certainly a man of whom men were generally afraid. At the whist-table no one would venture to scold him. In the court no one ever contradicted him. In his own house, though he was very quiet, the servants dreaded to offend him, and were attentive to his slightest behests. When he condescended to ride with any acquaintance in the park, it was always acknowledged that old Wharton was to regulate the pace. His name was Abel, and all his life he had been known as able Abe;—a silent, far-seeing, close-fisted, just old man, who was not, however, by any means deficient in sympathy either with the sufferings or with the joys of humanity.

It was Easter time and the courts were not sitting,

but Mr. Wharton was in his chamber as a matter of course at ten o'clock. He knew no real homely comforts elsewhere,—unless at the whist-table at the Eldon. He ate and drank and slept in his own house in Manchester Square, but he could hardly be said to live there. It was not there that his mind was awake, and that the powers of the man were exercised. When he came up from the dining-room to join his daughter after dinner he would get her to sing him a song, and would then seat himself with a book. But he never read in his own house, invariably falling into a sweet and placid slumber, from which he was never disturbed till his daughter kissed him as she went to bed. Then he would walk about the room, and look at his watch, and shuffle uneasily through half an hour till his conscience allowed him to take himself to his chamber. He was a man of no pursuits in his own house. But from ten in the morning till five, or often till six, in the evening, his mind was active in some work. It was not now all law as it used to be. In the drawer of the old piece of furniture which stood just at the right hand of his own arm-chair there were various books hidden away, which he was sometimes ashamed to have seen by his clients,—poetry and novels and even fairy tales. For there was nothing Mr. Wharton could not read in his chambers, though there was nothing that he could read in his own house. He had a large pleasant room in which to sit, looking out from the ground floor of Stone Buildings on to the gardens belonging to the Inn,—and here, in the centre of the metropolis, but in perfect quiet as far as the outside world was concerned, he had lived and still lived his life.

At about noon on the day following that on which Lopez had made his sudden swoop on Mr. Parker and had then dined with Everett Wharton he called at Stone Buildings and was shown into the lawyer's room. His quick eye at once discovered the book which Mr. Wharton half hid away, and saw upon it Mr. Mudie's suspicious ticket. Barristers certainly never get their law books from Mudie, and Lopez at once knew that his hoped-for father-in-law had been reading a novel. He had not suspected such weakness, but argued well from it for the business he had in hand. There must be a soft spot to be found about the heart of an old lawyer who spent his mornings in such occupation. "How do you do, sir?" said Mr. Wharton, rising from his seat. "I hope I see you well, sir." Though he had been reading a novel his tone and manner were very cold. Lopez had never been in Stone Buildings before, and was not quite sure that he might not have committed some offence in coming there. "Take a seat, Mr. Lopez. Is there anything I can do for you in my way?"

There was a great deal that could be done "in his way" as father;—but how was it to be introduced and the case made clear? Lopez did not know whether the old man had as yet ever suspected such a feeling as that which he now intended to declare. He had been intimate at the house in Manchester Square, and had certainly ingratiated himself very closely with a certain Mrs. Roby, who had been Mrs. Wharton's sister and constant companion, who lived in Berkeley Street close round the corner from Manchester Square, and spent very much of her time with Emily Wharton. They were together daily, as though Mrs. Roby had assumed

the part of a second mother, and Lopez was well aware that Mrs. Roby knew of his love. If there was real confidence between Mrs. Roby and the old lawyer, the old lawyer must know it also;—but as to that Lopez felt that he was in the dark.

The task of speaking to an old father is not unpleasant when the lover knows that he has been smiled upon, and, in fact, approved for the last six months. He is going to be patted on the back, and made much of, and received into the family. He is to be told that his Mary or his Augusta has been the best daughter in the world and will therefore certainly be the best wife, and he himself will probably on that special occasion be spoken of with unqualified praise,—and all will be pleasant. But the subject is one very difficult to broach when no previous light has been thrown on it. Ferdinand Lopez, however, was not the man to stand shivering on the brink when a plunge was necessary, —and therefore he made his plunge. "Mr. Wharton, I have taken the liberty to call upon you here, because I want to speak to you about your daughter."

"About my daughter!" The old man's surprise was quite genuine. Of course when he had given himself a moment to think he knew what must be the nature of his visitor's communication. But up to that moment he had never mixed his daughter and Ferdinand Lopez in his thoughts together. And now, the idea having come upon him, he looked at the aspirant with severe and unpleasant eyes. It was manifest to the aspirant that the first flash of the thing was painful to the father.

"Yes, sir. I know how great is my presumption. But, yet, having ventured, I will hardly say to enter-

tain a hope, but to have come to such a state that I can only be happy by hoping, I have thought it best to come to you at once."

"Does she know anything of this?"

"Of my visit to you? Nothing."

"Of your intentions;—of your suit generally? Am I to understand that this has any sanction from her?"

"None at all."

"Have you told her anything of it?"

"Not a word. I come to ask you for your permission to address her."

"You mean that she has no knowledge whatever of your,—your preference for her."

"I cannot say that. It is hardly possible that I should have learned to love her as I do without some consciousness on her part that it is so."

"What I mean is, without any beating about the bush,—have you been making love to her?"

"Who is to say in what making love consists, Mr. Wharton?"

"D—— it, sir, a gentleman knows. A gentleman knows whether he has been playing on a girl's feelings, and a gentleman when he is asked as I have asked you will at any rate tell the truth. I don't want any definitions. Have you been making love to her?"

"I think, Mr. Wharton, that I have behaved like a gentleman; and that you will acknowledge at least so much when you come to know exactly what I have done and what I have not done. I have endeavoured to commend myself to your daughter, but I have never spoken a word of love to her."

"Does Everett know of all this?"

"Yes."

"And has he encouraged it?"

"He knows of it, because he is my most intimate friend. Whoever the lady might have been I should have told him. He is attached to me, and would not, I think, on his own account, object to call me his brother. I spoke to him yesterday on the matter very plainly, and he told me that I ought certainly to see you first. I quite agreed with him, and therefore I am here. There has certainly been nothing in his conduct to make you angry, and I do not think that there has been anything in mine."

There was a dignity of demeanour and a quiet assured courage which had its effect upon the old lawyer. He felt that he could not storm and talk in ambiguous language of what a "gentleman" would or would not do. He might disapprove of this man altogether as a son-in-law,—and at the present moment he thought that he did,—but still the man was entitled to a civil answer. How were lovers to approach the ladies of their love in any manner more respectful than this? "Mr. Lopez," he said, "you must forgive me if I say, that you are comparatively a stranger to us."

"That is an accident which would be easily cured if your will in that direction were as good as mine."

"But, perhaps, it is n't. One has to be explicit in these matters. A daughter's happiness is a very serious consideration;—and some people, among whom I confess that I am one, consider that like should marry like. I should wish to see my daughter marry,—not only in my own sphere, neither higher nor lower,—but with some one of my own class."

"I hardly know, Mr. Wharton, whether that is intended to exclude me."

"Well,—to tell you the truth I know nothing about you. I don't know who your father was,—whether he was an Englishman, whether he was a Christian, whether he was a Protestant,—not even whether he was a gentleman. These are questions which I should not dream of asking under any other circumstances; —would be matters with which I should have no possible concern, if you were simply an acquaintance. But when you talk to a man about his daughter——!"

"I acknowledge freely your right of inquiry."

"And I know nothing of your means;—nothing whatever. I understand that you live as a man of fortune, but I presume that you earn your bread. I know nothing of the way in which you earn it, nothing of the certainty or amount of your means."

"Those things are of course matters for inquiry; but may I presume that you have no objection which satisfactory answers to such questions may not remove?"

"I shall never willingly give my daughter to any one who is not the son of an English gentleman. It may be a prejudice, but that is my feeling."

"My father was certainly not an English gentleman. He was a Portuguese." In admitting this, and in thus subjecting himself at once to one clearly stated ground of objection,—the objection being one which though admitted carried with itself neither fault nor disgrace, —Lopez felt that he had got a certain advantage. He could not get over the fact that he was the son of a Portuguese parent, but by admitting that openly he thought he might avoid present discussion on matters which might, perhaps, be more disagreeable, but to which he need not allude if the accident of his birth

were to be taken by the father as settling the question. "My mother was an English lady," he added, "but my father certainly was not an Englishman. I never had the common happiness of knowing either of them. I was an orphan before I understood what it was to have a parent."

This was said with a pathos which for the moment stopped the expression of any further harsh criticism from the lawyer. Mr. Wharton could not instantly repeat his objection to a parentage which was matter for such melancholy reflections; but he felt at the same time that as he had luckily landed himself on a positive and undeniable ground of objection to a match which was distasteful to him, it would be unwise for him to go to other matters in which he might be less successful. By doing so, he would seem to abandon the ground which he had already made good. He thought it probable that the man might have an adequate income, and yet he did not wish to welcome him as a son-in-law. He thought it possible that the Portuguese father might be a Portuguese nobleman, and therefore one whom he would be driven to admit to have been in some sort a gentleman;—but yet this man who was now in his presence and whom he continued to scan with the closest observation, was not what he called a gentleman. The foreign blood was proved, and that would suffice. As he looked at Lopez he thought that he detected Jewish signs, but he was afraid to make any allusion to religion, lest Lopez should declare that his ancestors had been noted as Christians since St. James first preached in the Peninsula.

"I was educated altogether in England," continued

Lopez, "till I was sent to a German university in the idea that the languages of the continent are not generally well learned in this country. I can never be sufficiently thankful to my guardian for doing so."

"I dare say. I dare say. French and German are very useful. I have a prejudice of my own in favour of Greek and Latin."

"But I rather fancy I picked up more Greek and Latin at Bohn than I should have got here, had I stuck to nothing else."

"I dare say;—I dare say. You may be an admirable Crichton for what I know."

"I have not intended to make any boast, sir, but simply to vindicate those who had the care of my education. If you have no objection except that founded on my birth, which is an accident——"

"When one man is a peer and another a ploughman, that is an accident. One does n't find fault with the ploughman, but one does n't ask him to dinner."

"But my accident," said Lopez, smiling, "is one which you would hardly discover unless you were told. Had I called myself Talbot you would not know but that I was as good an Englishman as yourself."

"A man of course may be taken in by falsehoods," said the lawyer.

"If you have no other objection than that raised, I hope you will allow me to visit in Manchester Square."

"There may be ten thousand other objections, Mr. Lopez, but I really think that the one is enough. Of course I know nothing of my daughter's feelings. I should imagine that the matter is as strange to her as it is to me. But I cannot give you anything like encour-

agement. If I am ever to have a son-in-law I should wish to have an English son-in-law. I do not even know what your profession is."

"I am engaged in foreign loans."

"Very precarious I should think. A sort of gambling; is n't it?"

"It is the business by which many of the greatest mercantile houses in the City have been made."

"I dare say; I dare say;—and by which they come to ruin. I have the greatest respect in the world for mercantile enterprise, and have had as much to do as most men with mercantile questions. But I ain't sure that I wish to marry my daughter in the City. Of course it 's all prejudice. I won't deny that on general subjects I can give as much latitude as any man; but when one's own hearth is attacked——"

"Surely such a proposition as mine, Mr. Wharton, is no attack!"

"In my sense it is. When a man proposes to assault and invade the very kernel of another man's heart, to share with him and indeed to take from him the very dearest of his possessions, to become part and parcel with him either for infinite good or infinite evil, then a man has a right to guard even his prejudices as precious bulwarks." Mr. Wharton as he said this was walking about the room with his hands in his trousers pockets. "I have always been for absolute toleration in matters of religion,—have always advocated admission of Roman Catholics and Jews into Parliament, and even to the Bench. In ordinary life I never question a man's religion. It is nothing to me whether he believes in Mahomet, or has no belief at all. But when a man comes to me for my daughter——"

"I have always belonged to the Church of England," said Ferdinand Lopez.

"Lopez is at any rate a bad name to go to a Protestant church with, and I don't want my daughter to bear it. I am very frank with you, as in such a matter men ought to understand each other. Personally I have liked you well enough and have been glad to see you at my house. Everett and you have seemed to be friends, and I have had no objection to make. But marrying into a family is a very serious thing indeed."

"No man feels that more strongly than I do, Mr. Wharton."

"There had better be an end of it."

"Even though I should be happy enough to obtain her favour?"

"I can't think that she cares about you. I don't think it for a moment. You say you have n't spoken to her, and I am sure she 's not a girl to throw herself at a man's head. I don't approve it, and I think it had better fall to the ground. It must fall to the ground."

"I wish you would give me a reason."

"Because you are not English."

"But I am English. My father was a foreigner."

"It does n't suit my ideas. I suppose I may have my own ideas about my own family, Mr. Lopez? I feel perfectly certain that my child will do nothing to displease me, and this would displease me. If we were to talk for an hour I could say nothing further."

"I hope that I may be able to present things to you in an aspect so altered," said Lopez as he pre-

pared to take his leave, "as to make you change your mind."

"Possibly;—possibly," said Wharton, "but I do not think it probable. Good morning to you, sir. If I have said anything that has seemed to be unkind put it down to my anxiety as a father and not to my conduct as a man." Then the door was closed behind his visitor, and Mr. Wharton was left walking up and down his room alone. He was by no means satisfied with himself. He felt that he had been rude and at the same time not decisive. He had not explained to the man as he would wish to have done, that it was monstrous and out of the question that a daughter of the Whartons, one of the oldest families in England, should be given to a friendless Portuguese,—a probable Jew,—about whom nobody knew anything. Then he remembered that sooner or later his girl would have at least £60,000, a fact of which no human being but himself was aware. Would it not be well that somebody should be made aware of it, so that his girl might have the chance of suitors preferable to this swarthy son of Judah? He began to be afraid, as he thought of it, that he was not managing his matters well. How would it be with him if he should find that the girl was really in love with this swarthy son of Judah? He had never inquired about his girl's heart, though there was one to whom he hoped that his girl's heart might some day be given. He almost made up his mind to go home at once, so anxious was he. But the prospect of having to spend an entire afternoon in Manchester Square was too much for him, and he remained in his chamber till the usual hour.

Lopez as he returned from Lincoln's Inn, westward

to his club, was, on the whole, contented with the interview. He had expected opposition. He had not thought that the cherry would fall easily into his mouth. But the conversation generally had not taken those turns which he had thought would be most detrimental to him.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. ROBY.

Mr. Wharton as he walked home remembered that Mrs. Roby was to dine at his house on that evening. During the remainder of the day, after the departure of Lopez, he had been unable to take his mind from the consideration of the proposition made to him. He had tried the novel, and he had tried Huggins v. the Trustees of the Charity of St. Ambox, a case of undeniable importance in which he was engaged on the part of Huggins, but neither was sufficiently powerful to divert his thoughts. Throughout the morning he was imagining what he would say to Emily about this lover of hers,—in what way he would commence the conversation, and how he would express his own opinion should he find that she was in any degree favourable to the man. Should she altogether ignore the man's pretensions, there would be no difficulty. But if she hesitated,—if, as was certainly possible, she should show any partiality for the man, then there would be a knot which would require untying. Hitherto the intercourse between the father and daughter had been simple and pleasant. He had given her everything she asked for, and she had obeyed him in all the very few matters as to which he had demanded obedience. Questions of discipline, as far as there had

been any discipline, had generally been left to Mrs. Roby. Mrs. Roby was to dine in Manchester Square to-day, and perhaps it would be well that he should have a few words with Mrs. Roby before he spoke to his daughter.

Mrs. Roby had a husband, but Mr. Roby had not been asked to dine in the Square on this occasion. Mrs. Roby dined in the Square very often, but Mr. Roby very seldom,—not probably above once a year on some special occasion. He and Mr. Wharton had married sisters, but they were quite unlike in character and had never become friends. Mrs. Wharton had been nearly twenty years younger than her husband; Mrs. Roby had been six or seven years younger than her sister; and Mr. Roby was a year or two younger than his wife. The two men therefore belonged to different periods of life, Mr. Roby at the present time being a florid youth of forty. He had a moderate fortune, inherited from his mother, of which he was sufficiently careful; but he loved races, and read sporting papers; he was addicted to hunting and billiards; he shot pigeons, and,—so Mr. Wharton had declared calumniously more than once to an intimate friend,—had not an H in his vocabulary. The poor man did drop an aspirate now and again; but he knew his defect and strove hard, and with fair average success, to overcome it. But Mr. Wharton did not love him and they were not friends. Perhaps neither did Mrs. Roby love him very ardently. She was at any rate almost always willing to leave her own house to come to the Square, and on such occasions Mr. Roby was always willing to dine at the Nimrod, the club which it delighted him to frequent.

Mr. Wharton, on entering his own house, met his son on the staircase. "Do you dine at home to-day, Everett?"

"Well, sir; no, sir. I don't think I do. I think I half promised to dine with a fellow at the club."

"Don't you think you 'd make things meet more easily about the end of the year if you dined oftener here where you have nothing to pay, and less frequently at the club where you pay for everything?"

"But what I should save, you would lose, sir. That 's the way I look at it."

"Then I advise you to look at it the other way and leave me to take care of myself. Come in here, I want to speak to you." Everett followed his father into a dingy back parlour which was fitted up with bookshelves and was generally called the study, but which was gloomy and comfortless because it was seldom used. "I have had your friend Lopez with me at my chambers to-day. I don't like your friend Lopez."

"I am sorry for that, sir."

"He is a man as to whom I should wish to have a good deal of evidence before I would trust him to be what he seems to be. I dare say he 's clever."

"I think he 's more than clever."

"I dare say;—and well instructed in some respects."

"I believe him to be a thorough linguist, sir."

"I dare say. I remember a waiter at an hotel in Holborn who could speak seven languages. It 's an accomplishment very necessary for a Courier or a Queen's Messenger."

"You don't mean to say, sir, that you disregard foreign languages?"

"I have said nothing of the kind. But in my estimation they don't stand in the place of principles, or a profession, or birth, or country. I fancy there has been some conversation between you about your sister."

"Certainly there has."

"A young man should be very chary how he speaks to another man, to a stranger, about his sister. A sister's name should be too sacred for club talk."

"Club talk! Good heavens, sir; you don't think that I have spoken of Emily in that way? There is n't a man in London has a higher respect for his sister than I have for mine. This man, by no means in a light way but with all seriousness, has told me that he was attached to Emily; and I, believing him to be a gentleman and well to do in the world, have referred him to you. Can that have been wrong?"

"I don't know how he 's 'to do,' as you call it. I have n't asked, and I don't mean to ask. But I doubt his being a gentleman. He is not an English gentleman. What was his father?"

"I have n't the least idea."

"Or his mother?"

"He has never mentioned her to me."

"Nor his family; nor anything of their antecedents? He is a man fallen out of the moon. All that is nothing to us as passing acquaintances. Between men such ignorance should I think bar absolute intimacy;—but that may be a matter of taste. But it should be held to be utterly antagonistic to any such alliance as that of marriage. He seems to be a friend of yours. You had better make him understand that it is quite out of the question. I have told him so,

and you had better repeat it." So saying, Mr. Wharton went upstairs to dress, and Everett, having received his father's instructions, went away to the club.

When Mr. Wharton reached the drawing-room, he found Mrs. Roby alone, and he at once resolved to discuss the matter with her before he spoke to his daughter. "Harriet," he said abruptly, "do you know anything of one Mr. Lopez?"

"Mr. Lopez! Oh yes, I know him."

"Do you mean that he is an intimate friend?"

"As friends go in London, he is. He comes to our house, and I think that he hunts with Dick." Dick was Mr. Roby.

"That 's a recommendation."

"Well, Mr. Wharton, I hardly know what you mean by that," said Mrs. Roby, smiling. "I don't think my husband will do Mr. Lopez any harm; and I am sure Mr. Lopez won't do my husband any."

"I dare say not. But that 's not the question. Roby can take care of himself."

"Quite so."

"And so I dare say can Mr. Lopez." At this moment Emily entered the room. "My dear," said her father, "I am speaking to your aunt. Would you mind going downstairs and waiting for us? Tell them we shall be ready for dinner in ten minutes." Then Emily passed out of the room, and Mrs. Roby assumed a grave demeanour. "The man we are speaking of has been to me and has made an offer for Emily." As he said this he looked anxiously into his sister-in-law's face, in order that he might tell from that how far she favoured the idea of such a marriage, —and he thought that he perceived at once that she

was not averse to it. "You know it is quite out of the question," he continued.

"I don't know why it should be out of the question. But of course your opinion would have great weight with Emily."

"Great weight! Well;—I should hope so. If not, I do not know whose opinion is to have weight. In the first place the man is a foreigner."

"Oh no;—he is English. But if he were a foreigner,—many English girls marry foreigners."

"My daughter shall not;—not with my permission. You have not encouraged him, I hope."

"I have not interfered at all," said Mrs. Roby. But this was a lie. Mrs. Roby had interfered. Mrs. Roby, in discussing the merits and character of the lover with the young lady, had always lent herself to the lover's aid,—and had condescended to accept from the lover various presents which she could hardly have taken had she been hostile to him.

"And now tell me about herself. Has she seen him often?"

"Why, Mr. Wharton, he has dined here, in the house, over and over again. I thought that you were encouraging him."

"Heavens and earth!"

"Of course she has seen him. When a man dines at a house he is bound to call. Of course he has called,—I don't know how often. And she has met him round the corner."—"Round the corner," in Manchester Square, meant Mrs. Roby's house in Berkeley Street.—"Last Sunday they were at the Zoo together. Dick got them tickets. I thought you knew all about it."

"Do you mean that my daughter went to the Zoölogical Gardens alone with this man?" the father asked in dismay.

"Dick was with them. I should have gone, only I had a headache. Did you not know she went?"

"Yes;—I heard about the Gardens. But I heard nothing of the man."

"I thought, Mr. Wharton, you were all in his favour."

"I am not at all in his favour. I dislike him particularly. For anything I know he may have sold pencils about the streets like any other Jew-boy."

"He goes to church just as you do,—that is, if he goes anywhere; which I dare say he does about as often as yourself, Mr. Wharton." Now Mr. Wharton, though he was a thorough and perhaps a bigoted member of the Church of England, was not fond of going to church.

"Do you mean to tell me," he said, pressing his hands together, and looking very seriously into his sister-in-law's face; "do you mean to tell me that she —likes him?"

"Yes;—I think she does like him."

"You don't mean to say—she 's in love with him?"

"She has never told me that she is. Young ladies are shy of making such assertions as to their own feelings before the due time for doing so has come. I think she prefers him to anybody else; and that were he to propose to herself, she would give him her consent to go to you."

"He shall never enter this house again," said Mr. Wharton passionately.

"You must arrange that with her. If you have so

strong an objection to him, I wonder that you should have had him here at all."

"How was I to know? God bless my soul!—just because a man was allowed to dine here once or twice! Upon my word, it 's too bad!"

"Papa, won't you and aunt come down to dinner?" said Emily, opening the door gently. Then they went down to dinner, and during the meal nothing was said about Mr. Lopez. But they were not very merry together, and poor Emily felt sure that her own affairs had been discussed in a troublesome manner.

CHAPTER V.

"NO ONE KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT HIM."

NEITHER at dinner, on that evening at Manchester Square, nor after dinner, as long as Mrs. Roby remained in the house, was a word said about Lopez by Mr. Wharton. He remained longer than usual with his bottle of port-wine in the dining-room; and when he went upstairs, he sat himself down and fell asleep, almost without a sign. He did not ask for a song, nor did Emily offer to sing. But as soon as Mrs. Roby was gone,—and Mrs. Roby went home, round the corner, somewhat earlier than usual,—then Mr. Wharton woke up instantly and made inquiry of his daughter.

There had, however, been a few words spoken on the subject between Mrs. Roby and her niece which had served to prepare Emily for what was coming. "Lopez has been to your father," said Mrs. Roby, in a voice not specially encouraging for such an occasion. Then she paused a moment; but her niece said nothing and she continued, "Yes,—and your father has been blaming me,—as if I had done anything! If he did not mean you to choose for yourself, why did n't he keep a closer look-out?"

"I have n't chosen any one, Aunt Harriet."

"Well;—to speak fairly, I thought you had; and

I have nothing to say against your choice. As young men go I think Mr. Lopez is as good as the best of them. I don't know why you should n't have him. Of course you 'll have money, but then I suppose he makes a large income himself. As to Mr. Fletcher, you don't care a bit about him."

"Not in that way, certainly."

"No doubt your papa will have it out with you just now; so you had better make up your mind what you will say to him. If you really like the man, I don't see why you should n't say so, and stick to it. He has made a regular offer, and girls in these days are not expected to be their father's slaves." Emily said nothing further to her aunt on that occasion, but finding that she must in truth "have it out" with her father presently, gave herself up to reflection. It might probably be the case that the whole condition of her future life would depend on the way in which she might now "have it out" with her father.

I would not wish the reader to be prejudiced against Miss Wharton by the not unnatural feeling which may perhaps be felt in regard to the aunt. Mrs. Roby was pleased with little intrigues, was addicted to the amusement of fostering love affairs, was fond of being thought to be useful in such matters, and was not averse to having presents given to her. She had married a vulgar man; and, though she had not become like the man, she had become vulgar. She was not an eligible companion for Mr. Wharton's daughter,—a matter as to which the father had not given himself proper opportunities of learning the facts. An aunt in his close neighbourhood was so great a comfort to him,—so ready and so natural an

assistance to him in his difficulties! But Emily Wharton was not in the least like her aunt, nor had Mrs. Wharton been at all like Mrs. Roby. No doubt the contact was dangerous. Injury had perhaps already been done. It may be that some slightest soil had already marred the pure white of the girl's natural character. But if so, the stain was as yet too impalpable to be visible to ordinary eyes.

Emily Wharton was a tall, fair girl, with grey eyes, rather exceeding the average proportions as well as height of women. Her features were regular and handsome, and her form was perfect; but it was by her manner and her voice that she conquered rather than by her beauty,—by those gifts and by a clearness of intellect joined with that feminine sweetness which has its most frequent foundation in self-denial. Those who knew her well, and had become attached to her, were apt to endow her with all virtues, and to give her credit for a loveliness which strangers did not find on her face. But as we do not light up our houses with our brightest lamps for all comers, so neither did she emit from her eyes their brightest sparks till special occasion for such shining had arisen.. To those who were allowed to love her no woman was more lovable. There was innate in her an appreciation of her own position as a woman, and with it a principle of self-denial as a human being, which it was beyond the power of any Mrs. Roby to destroy or even to defile by small stains.

Like other girls she had been taught to presume that it was her destiny to be married, and like other girls she had thought much about her destiny. A young man generally regards it as his destiny either to

succeed or to fail in the world, and he thinks about that. To him marriage, when it comes, is an accident to which he has hardly as yet given a thought. But to the girl the matrimony which is or is not to be her destiny contains within itself the only success or failure which she anticipates. The young man may become lord chancellor, or at any rate earn his bread comfortably as a county court judge. But the girl can look forward to little else than the chance of having a good man for her husband;—a good man, or, if her tastes lie in that direction, a rich man. Emily Wharton had doubtless thought about these things, and she sincerely believed that she had found the good man in Ferdinand Lopez.

The man, certainly, was one strangely endowed with the power of creating a belief. When going to Mr. Wharton at his chambers he had not intended to cheat the lawyer into any erroneous idea about his family, but he had resolved that he would so discuss the questions of his own condition, which would probably be raised, as to leave upon the old man's mind an unfounded conviction that in regard to money and income he had no reason to fear question. Not a word had been said about his money or his income. And Mr. Wharton had felt himself bound to abstain from allusion to such matters from an assured feeling that he could not in that direction plant an enduring objection. In this way Lopez had carried his point with Mr. Wharton. He had convinced Mrs. Roby that among all the girl's attractions the greatest attraction for him was the fact that she was Mrs. Roby's niece. He had made Emily herself believe that the one strong passion of his life was his love for her, and

this he had done without ever having asked for her love. And he had even taken the trouble to allure Dick, and had listened to and had talked whole pages out of "Bell's Life." On his own behalf it must be acknowledged that he did love the girl, as well perhaps as he was capable of loving any one;—but he had found out many particulars as to Mr. Wharton's money before he had allowed himself to love her.

As soon as Mrs. Roby had gathered up her knitting, and declared, as she always did on such occasions, that she could go round the corner without having any one to look after her, Mr. Wharton began. "Emily, my dear, come here." Then she came and sat on a foot-stool at his feet, and looked up into his face. "Do you know what I am going to speak to you about, my darling?"

"Yes, papa; I think I do. It is about—Mr. Lopez."

"Your aunt has told you, I suppose. Yes; it is about Mr. Lopez. I have been very much astonished to-day by Mr. Lopez,—a man of whom I have seen very little and know less. He came to me to-day and asked for my permission—to address you." She sat perfectly quiet, still looking at him, but she did not say a word. "Of course I did not give him permission."

"Why of course, papa?"

"Because he is a stranger and a foreigner. Would you have wished me to tell him that he might come?"

"Yes, papa." He was sitting on a sofa and shrank back a little from her as she made this free avowal. "In that case I could have judged for myself. I suppose every girl would like to do that."

"But should you have accepted him?"

"I think I should have consulted you before I did that. But I should have wished to accept him. Papa, I do love him. I have never said so before to any one. I would not say so to you now, if he had not —spoken to you as he has done."

"Emily, it must not be."

"Why not, papa? If you say it shall not be so, it shall not. I will do as you bid me." Then he put out his hand and caressed her, stroking down her hair. "But I think you ought to tell me why it must not be, —as I do love him."

"He is a foreigner."

"But is he? And why should not a foreigner be as good as an Englishman? His name is foreign, but he talks English and lives as an Englishman."

"He has no relatives, no family, no belongings. He is what we call an adventurer. Marriage, my dear, is a most serious thing."

"Yes, papa, I know that."

"One is bound to be very careful. How can I give you to a man I know nothing about,—an adventurer? What would they say in Herefordshire?"

"I don't know why they should say anything, but if they did I should n't much care."

"I should, my dear. I should care very much. One is bound to think of one's family. Suppose it should turn out afterwards that he was—disreputable!"

"You may say that of any man, papa."

"But when a man has connections, a father and mother, or uncles and aunts, people that everybody knows about, then there is some guarantee of security. Did you ever hear this man speak of his father?"

"I don't know that I ever did."

"Or his mother,—or his family? Don't you think that is suspicious?"

"I will ask him, papa, if you wish."

"No, I would have you ask him nothing. I would not wish that there should be opportunity for such asking. If there has been intimacy between you, such information should have come naturally,—as a thing of course. You have made him no promise?"

"Oh no, papa."

"Nor spoken to him—of your regard for him?"

"Never;—not a word. Nor he to me,—except in such words as one understands even though they say nothing."

"I wish he had never seen you."

"Is he a bad man, papa?"

"Who knows? I cannot tell. He may be ever so bad. How is one to know whether a man be bad or good when one knows nothing about him?" At this point the father got up and walked about the room. "The long and the short of it is that you must not see him any more."

"Did you tell him so?"

"Yes;—well; I don't know whether I said exactly that, but I told him that the whole thing must come to an end. And it must. Luckily it seems that nothing has been said on either side."

"But, papa——; is there to be no reason?"

"Have n't I given reasons? I will not have my daughter encourage an adventurer,—a man of whom nobody knows anything. That is reason sufficient."

"He has a business, and lives with gentlemen. He is Everett's friend. He is well educated;—oh, so

much better than most men that one meets. And he is clever. Papa, I wish you knew him better than you do."

"I do not want to know him better."

"Is not that prejudice, papa?"

"My dear Emily," said Mr. Wharton, striving to wax into anger that he might be firm against her, "I don't think that it becomes you to ask your father such a question as that. You ought to believe that it is the chief object of my life to do the best I can for my children."

"I am sure it is."

"And you ought to feel that as I have had a long experience in the world my judgment about a young man might be trusted."

That was a statement which Miss Wharton was not prepared to admit. She had already professed herself willing to submit to her father's judgment, and did not now by any means contemplate rebellion against parental authority. But she did feel that on a matter so vital to her she had a right to plead her cause before judgment should be given, and she was not slow to assure herself, even as this interview went on, that her love for the man was strong enough to entitle her to assure her father that her happiness depended on his reversal of the sentence already pronounced. "You know, papa, that I trust you," she said. "And I have promised you that I will not disobey you. If you tell me that I am never to see Mr. Lopez again, I will not see him."

"You are a good girl. You were always a good girl."

"But I think that you ought to hear me." Then

he stood still with his hands in his trousers pockets looking at her. He did not want to hear a word, but he felt that he would be a tyrant if he refused. "If you tell me that I am not to see him, I shall not see him. But I shall be very unhappy. I do love him, and I shall never love any one else in the same way."

"That is nonsense, Emily. There is Arthur Fletcher."

"I am sure you will never ask me to marry a man I do not love, and I shall never love Arthur Fletcher. If this is to be as you say, it will make me very, very wretched. It is right that you should know the truth. If it is only because Mr. Lopez has a foreign name——"

"It is n't only that; no one knows anything about him, or where to inquire even."

"I think you should inquire, papa, and be quite certain before you pronounce such a sentence against me. It will be a crushing blow." He looked at her, and saw that there was a fixed purpose in her countenance of which he had never before seen similar signs. "You claim a right to my obedience, and I acknowledge it. I am sure you believe me when I promise not to see him without your permission."

"I do believe you. Of course I believe you."

"But if I do that for you, papa, I think that you ought to be very sure, on my account, that I have n't to bear such unhappiness for nothing. You 'll think about it, papa,—will you not, before you quite decide?" She leaned against him as she spoke, and he kissed her. "Good night, now, papa. You will think about it?"

"I will. I will. Of course I will."

And he began the process of thinking about it im-

mediately,—before the door was closed behind her. But what was there to think about? Nothing that she had said altered in the least his idea about the man. He was as convinced as ever that unless there was much to conceal there would not be so much concealment. But a feeling began to grow upon him already that his daughter had a mode of pleading with him which he would not ultimately be able to resist. He had the power, he knew, of putting an end to the thing altogether. He had only to say resolutely and unchangeably that the thing should n't be, and it would n't be. If he could steel his heart against his daughter's sorrow for, say, a twelvemonth, the victory would be won. But he already began to fear that he lacked the power to steel his heart against his daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

AN OLD FRIEND GOES TO WINDSOR.

"And what are they going to make you now?"

This question was asked of her husband by a lady with whom perhaps the readers of this volume may have already formed some acquaintance. Chronicles of her early life have been written, at any rate, copiously. The lady was the Duchess of Omnium, and her husband was of course the Duke. In order that the nature of the question asked by the Duchess may be explained, it must be stated that just at this time the political affairs of the nation had got themselves tied up into one of those truly desperate knots from which even the wisdom and experience of septuagenarian statesmen can see no unravelment. The heads of parties were at a stand-still. In the House of Commons there was, so to say, no majority on either side. The minds of members were so astray that, according to the best calculation that could be made, there would be a majority of about ten against any possible Cabinet. There would certainly be a majority against either of those well-tried but, at this moment, little-trusted Prime Ministers, Mr. Gresham and Mr. Daubeny. There were certain men, nominally belonging to this or to the other party, who would certainly within a week of the nomination of a Cabinet in the House, oppose the

Cabinet which they ought to support. Mr. Daubeny had been in power,—nay, was in power though he had twice resigned. Mr. Gresham had been twice sent for to Windsor, and had on one occasion undertaken and on another had refused to undertake to form a ministry. Mr. Daubeny had tried two or three combinations, and had been at his wits' end. He was no doubt still in power,—could appoint bishops, and make peers, and give away ribbons. But he could n't pass a law, and certainly continued to hold his present uncomfortable position by no will of his own. But a Prime Minister cannot escape till he has succeeded in finding a successor; and though the successor be found and consents to make an attempt, the old unfortunate cannot be allowed to go free when that attempt is shown to be a failure. He has not absolutely given up the keys of his boxes, and no one will take them from him. Even a sovereign can abdicate; but the Prime Minister of a constitutional government is in bonds. The reader may therefore understand that the Duchess was asking her husband what place among the political rulers of the country had been offered to him by the last aspirant to the leadership of the Government.

But the reader should understand more than this, and may perhaps do so, if he has ever seen those former chronicles to which allusion has been made. The Duke, before he became a duke, had held very high office, having been Chancellor of the Exchequer. When he was transferred, perforce, to the House of Lords, he had,—as is not uncommon in such cases,—accepted a lower political station. This had displeased the Duchess, who was ambitious both on her own behalf and that of her lord,—and who thought that a

Duke of Omnium should be nothing in the Government if not at any rate near the top. But after that, with the simple and single object of doing some special piece of work for the nation,—something which he fancied that nobody else would do if he did n't do it,—his Grace, of his own motion, at his own solicitation, had encountered further official degradation, very much to the disgust of the Duchess. And it was not the way with her Grace to hide such sorrows in the depth of her bosom. When affronted she would speak out, whether to her husband, or to another,—using irony rather than argument to support her cause and to vindicate her ways. The shafts of ridicule hurled by her against her husband in regard to his voluntary abasement had been many and sharp. They stung him, but never for a moment influenced him. And though they stung him, they did not even anger him. It was her nature to say such things,—and he knew that they came rather from her uncontrolled spirit than from any malice. She was his wife too, and he had an idea that of little injuries of that sort there should be no end of bearing on the part of a husband. Sometimes he would endeavour to explain to her the motives which actuated him; but he had come to fear that they were and must ever be unintelligible to her. But he credited her with less than her real intelligence. She did understand the nature of his work and his reasons for doing it; and, after her own fashion, did what she conceived to be her own work in endeavouring to create within his bosom a desire for higher things. "Surely," she said to herself, "if a man of his rank is to be a minister he should be a great minister;—at any rate as great as his circumstances will make him. A man never can

save his country by degrading himself." In this he would probably have agreed; but his idea of degradation and hers hardly tallied.

When therefore she asked him what they were going to make him, it was as though some sarcastic housekeeper in a great establishment should ask the butler, —some butler too prone to yield in such matters,— whether the master had appointed him lately to the cleaning of shoes or the carrying of coals. Since these knots had become so very tight, and since the journeys to Windsor had become so very frequent, her Grace had asked many such questions, and had received but very indifferent replies. The Duke had sometimes declared that the matter was not ripe enough to allow him to make any answer. "Of course," said the Duchess, "you should keep the secret. The editors of the evening papers have n't known it for above an hour." At another time he told her that he had undertaken to give Mr. Gresham his assistance in any way in which it might be asked. "Joint Under-Secretary with Lord Fawn, I should say," answered the Duchess. Then he told her that he believed an attempt would be made at a mixed ministry, but that he did not in the least know to whom the work of doing so would be confided. "You will be about the last man who will be told," replied the Duchess. Now, at this moment, he had, as she knew, come direct from the house of Mr. Gresham, and she asked her question in her usual spirit. "And what are they going to make you now?"

But he did not answer the question in his usual manner. He would customarily smile gently at her badinage, and perhaps say a word intended to show that he

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was not in the [illegible] by her raillery. [illegible] instance he was [illegible] brave, and [illegible] her a moment making [illegible] at all [illegible] at her in a sad and almost [illegible]. They have told you that they can [illegible] and, breaking out almost [illegible]. I knew how it would be. Men are [illegible] by others as they value themselves."

"I wish [illegible] I should sleep easier to [illegible]."

"What [illegible]?" she exclaimed, jumping up [illegible].

"[illegible] for your [illegible] hitherto, Cora; but [illegible] I want your sympathy."

"If you are going to do anything,—to do really anything, you shall have it. Oh, how you [illegible]!"

"You are going to be Prime Minister!"

"I have received her Majesty's orders to go down to Windsor at once. I must [illegible] hour."

"You are going to be Prime Minister!" she exclaimed. [illegible] they [illegible] his embrace. [illegible] union [illegible] admiration. [illegible] only do [illegible] arm [illegible] of her [illegible] worshipped him yet, and therefore [illegible] it did come had all the delight [illegible] nas to the newly married [illegible].

"Stop a moment, Cora. I do not know how it may be yet. But this I know, that if without [illegible] I could avoid this task, I would certainly avoid it."

was not in the least moved by her raillery. But in this instance he was very grave, and stood before her a moment making no answer at all, looking at her in a sad and almost solemn manner. "They have told you that they can do without you," she said, breaking out almost into a passion. "I knew how it would be. Men are always valued by others as they value themselves."

"I wish it were so," he replied. "I should sleep easier to-night."

"What is it, Plantagenet?" she exclaimed, jumping up from her chair.

"I never cared for your ridicule hitherto, Cora; but now I feel that I want your sympathy."

"If you are going to do anything,—to do really anything, you shall have it. Oh, how you shall have it!"

"I have received her Majesty's orders to go down to Windsor at once. I must start within half an hour."

"You are going to be Prime Minister!" she exclaimed. As she spoke she threw her arms up, and then rushed into his embrace. Never since their first union had she been so demonstrative either of love or admiration. "Oh, Plantagenet," she said, "if I can only do anything I will slave for you." As he put his arm round her waist he already felt the pleasantness of her altered way to him. She had never worshipped him yet, and therefore her worship when it did come had all the delight to him which it ordinarily has to the newly married hero.

"Stop a moment, Cora. I do not know how it may be yet. But this I know, that if without cowardice I could avoid this task, I would certainly avoid it."

"Oh no! And there would be cowardice; of course there would," said the Duchess, not much caring what might be the bonds which bound him to the task so long as he should certainly feel himself to be bound.

"He has told me that he thinks it my duty to make the attempt."

"Who is he?"

"Mr. Gresham. I do not know that I should have felt myself bound by him, but the Duke said so also." This duke was our duke's old friend, the Duke of St. Bungay.

"Was he there? And who else?"

"No one else. It is no case for exultation, Cora, for the chances are that I shall fail. The Duke has promised to help me, on condition that one or two he has named are included, and that one or two whom he has also named are not. In each case I should myself have done exactly as he proposes."

"And Mr. Gresham?"

"He will retire. That is a matter of course. He will intend to support us; but all that is veiled in the obscurity which is always, I think, darker as to the future of politics than any other future. Clouds arise, one knows not why or whence, and create darkness when one expected light. But as yet, you must understand, nothing is settled. I cannot even say what answer I may make to her Majesty, till I know what commands her Majesty may lay upon me."

"You must keep a hold of it now, Plantagenet," said the Duchess, clenching her own fist.

"I will not even close a finger on it with any personal ambition," said the Duke. "If I could be re-

lieved from the burden this moment it would be an ease to my heart. I remember once," he said,—and as he spoke he again put his arm around her waist, "when I was debarred from taking office by a domestic circumstance."

"I remember that too," she said, speaking very gently and looking up at him.

"It was a grief to me at the time, though it turned out so well,—because the office then suggested to me was one which I thought I could fill with credit to the country. I believed in myself then as far as that work went. But for this attempt I have no belief in myself. I doubt whether I have any gift for governing men."

"It will come."

"It may be that I must try;—and it may be that I must break my heart because I fail. But I shall make the attempt if I am directed to do so in any manner that shall seem feasible. I must be off now. The Duke is to be here this evening. They had better have dinner ready for me whenever I may be able to eat it." Then he took his departure before she could say another word.

When the Duchess was alone she took to thinking of the whole thing in a manner which they who best knew her would have thought to be very unusual with her. She already possessed all that rank and wealth could give her, and together with those good things a peculiar position of her own, of which she was proud, and which she had made her own not by her wealth or rank, but by a certain fearless energy and power of raillery which never deserted her. Many feared her and she was afraid of none, and many also loved her, —whom she also loved, for her nature was affection-

ate. She was happy with her children, happy with her friends, in the enjoyment of perfect health, and capable of taking an exaggerated interest in anything that might come uppermost for the moment. One would have been inclined to say that politics were altogether unnecessary to her, and that as Duchess of Omnium, lately known as Lady Glencora Palliser, she had a wider and a pleasanter influence than could belong to any woman as wife of a Prime Minister. And she was essentially one of those women who are not contented to be known simply as the wives of their husbands. She had a celebrity of her own, quite independent of his position, and which could not be enhanced by any glory or any power added to him. Nevertheless when he left her to go down to the Queen with the prospect of being called upon to act as chief of the incoming ministry, her heart throbbed with excitement. It had come at last, and he would be, to her thinking, the leading man in the greatest kingdom of the world.

But she felt in regard to him somewhat as did Lady Macbeth towards her lord.

> "What thou would'st highly,
> That would'st thou holily."

She knew him to be full of scruples, unable to bend when aught was to be got by bending, unwilling to domineer when men might be brought to subjection only by domination. The first duty never could be taught to him. To win support by smiles when his heart was bitter within him would never be within the power of her husband. He could never be brought to buy an enemy by political gifts,—would never be prone to silence his keenest opponent by making him

his right-hand supporter. But the other lesson was easier and might she thought be learned. Power is so pleasant that men quickly learn to be greedy in the enjoyment of it, and to flatter themselves that patriotism requires them to be imperious. She would be constant with him day and night to make him understand that his duty to his country required him to be in very truth its chief ruler. And then with some knowledge of things as they are,—and also with much ignorance,—she reflected that he had at his command a means of obtaining popularity and securing power, which had not belonged to his immediate predecessors, and had perhaps never to the same extent been at the command of any minister in England. His wealth as Duke of Omnium had been great; but hers, as available for immediate purposes, had been greater even than his. After some fashion, of which she was profoundly ignorant, her own property was separated from his and reserved to herself and her children. Since her marriage she had never said a word to him about her money,—unless it were to ask that something out of the common course might be spent on some, generally absurd, object. But now had come the time for squandering money. She was not only rich but she had a popularity that was exclusively her own. The new Prime Minister and the new Prime Minister's wife should entertain after a fashion that had never yet been known even among the nobility of England. Both in town and country those great mansions should be kept open which were now rarely much used because she had found them dull, cold, and comfortless. In London there should not be a member of Parliament whom she would not herself know and influence by her

flattery and grace,—or if there were men whom she could not influence, they should live as men tabooed and unfortunate. Money mattered nothing. Their income was enormous, and for a series of years,—for half-a-dozen years if the game could be kept up so long,—they could spend treble what they called their income without real injury to their children. Visions passed through her brain of wondrous things which might be done,—if only her husband would be true to his own greatness.

The Duke had left her at about two. She did not stir out of the house that day, but in the course of the afternoon she wrote a line to a friend who lived not very far from her. The Duchess dwelt in Carlton Terrace, and her friend in Park Lane. The note was as follows:—

"Dear M.,—Come to me at once. I am too excited to go to you. Yours,

"G."

This was addressed to one Mrs. Finn, a lady as to whom chronicles also have been written, and who has been known to the readers of such chronicles as a friend dearly loved by the Duchess. As quickly as she could put on her carriage garments and get herself taken to Carlton Terrace Mrs. Finn was there. "Well, my dear, how do you think it 's all settled at last?" said the Duchess. It will probably be felt that the new Prime Minister's wife was indiscreet, and hardly worthy of the confidence placed in her by her husband. But surely we all have some one friend to

whom we tell everything, and with the Duchess Mrs. Finn was that one friend.

"Is the Duke to be Prime Minister?"

"How on earth should you have guessed that?"

"What else could make you so excited? Besides, it is by no means strange. I understand that they have gone on trying the two old stagers till it is useless to try them any longer; and if there is to be a fresh man no one would be more likely than the Duke."

"Do you think so?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"He has frittered away his political position by such meaningless concessions. And then he had never done anything to put himself forward,—at any rate since he left the House of Commons. Perhaps I have n't read things right,—but I was surprised, very much surprised."

"And gratified?"

"Oh yes. I can tell you everything because you will neither misunderstand me, nor tell tales of me. Yes,—I shall like him to be Prime Minister, though I know that I shall have a bad time of it myself."

"Why a bad time?"

"He is so hard to manage! Of course I don't mean about politics. Of course it must be a mixed kind of thing at first, and I don't care a straw whether it run to radicalism or toryism. The country goes on its own way, either for better or for worse, whichever of them are in. I don't think it makes any difference as to what sort of laws are passed. But among ourselves, in our set, it makes a deal of difference who get the garters, and the counties, who are made

barons and then earls, and whose name stands at the head of everything."

"That is your way of looking at politics?"

"I own it to you;—and I must teach it to him."

"You never will do that, Lady Glen."

"Never is a long word. I mean to try. For look back and tell me of any Prime Minister who has become sick of his power. They become sick of the want of power when it 's falling away from them,—and then they affect to disdain and put aside the thing they can no longer enjoy. Love of power is a kind of feeling which comes to a man as he grows older."

"Politics with the Duke have been simple patriotism," said Mrs. Finn.

"The patriotism may remain, my dear, but not the simplicity. I don't want him to sell his country to Germany, or to turn it into an American republic in order that he may be president. But when he gets the reins in his hands, I want him to keep them there. If he 's so much honester than other people, of course he 's the best man for the place. We must make him believe that the very existence of the country depends on his firmness."

"To tell you the truth, Lady Glen, I don't think you 'll ever make the Duke believe anything. What he believes, he believes either from very old habit, or from the working of his own mind."

"You 're always singing his praises, Marie."

"I don't know that there is any special praise in what I say; but as far as I can see, it is the man's character."

"Mr. Finn will come in, of course," said the Duchess.

"Mr. Finn will be like the Duke in one thing. He 'll take his own way as to being in or out quite independently of his wife."

"You 'd like him to be in office?"

"No, indeed! Why should I? He would be more often at the House, and keep later hours, and be always away all the morning into the bargain. But I shall like him to do as he likes himself."

"Fancy thinking of all that. I 'd sit up all night every night of my life,—I 'd listen to every debate in the House myself,—to have Plantagenet Prime Minister. I like to be busy. Well now, if it does come off——"

"It is n't settled then?"

"How can one hope that a single journey will settle it, when those other men have been going backwards and forwards between Windsor and London like buckets in a well for the last three weeks? But if it is settled I mean to have a cabinet of my own, and I mean that you shall do the foreign affairs."

"You 'd better let me be at the exchequer. I 'm very good at accounts."

"I 'll do that myself. The accounts that I intend to set agoing would frighten any one less audacious. And I mean to be my own home-secretary, and to keep my own conscience,—and to be my own master of the ceremonies certainly. I think a small cabinet gets on best. Do you know;—I should like to put the Queen down."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"No treason; nothing of that kind. But I should like to make Buckingham Palace second-rate; and

I 'm not quite sure but I can. I dare say you don't quite understand me."

"I don't think that I do, Lady Glen."

"You will some of these days. Come in to-morrow before lunch. I suppose I shall know all about it then, and shall have found that my basket of crockery has been kicked over and everything smashed."

CHAPTER VII.

ANOTHER OLD FRIEND.

At about nine the Duke had returned, and was eating his very simple dinner in the breakfast-room,—a beefsteak and a potato, with a glass of sherry and Apollinaris water. No man more easily satisfied as to what he eat and drank lived in London in those days. As regarded the eating and drinking he dined alone, but his wife sat with him and waited on him, having sent the servant out of the room. "I have told her Majesty that I would do the best I could," said the Duke.

"Then you are Prime Minister."

"Not at all. Mr. Daubeny is Prime Minister. I have undertaken to form a ministry, if I find it practicable, with the assistance of such friends as I possess. I never felt before that I had to lean so entirely on others as I do now."

"Lean on yourself only. Be enough for yourself."

"Those are empty words, Cora;—words that are quite empty. In one sense a man should always be enough for himself. He should have enough of principle and enough of conscience to restrain him from doing what he knows to be wrong. But can a shipbuilder build his ship single-handed, or the watchmaker make his watch without assistance? On former

occasions such as this, I could say, with little or no help from without, whether I would or would not undertake the work that was proposed to me, because I had only a bit of the ship to build, or a wheel of the watch to make. My own efficacy for my present task depends entirely on the co-operation of others, and unfortunately upon that of some others with whom I have no sympathy, nor have they with me."

"Leave them out," said the Duchess boldly.

"But they are men who will not be left out, and whose services the country has a right to expect."

"Then bring them in, and think no more about it. It is no good crying for pain that cannot be cured."

"Co-operation is difficult without community of feeling. I find myself to be too stubborn-hearted for the place. It was nothing for me to sit in the same Cabinet with a man I disliked when I had not put him there myself. But now—— As I have travelled up I have almost felt that I could not do it! I did not know before how much I might dislike a man."

"Who is the one man?"

"Nay;—whoever he be, he will have to be a friend now, and therefore I will not name him, even to you. But it is not one only. If it were one, absolutely marked and recognised, I might avoid him. But my friends, real friends, are so few! Who is there besides the Duke on whom I can lean with both confidence and love?"

"Lord Cantrip."

"Hardly so, Cora. But Lord Cantrip goes out with Mr. Gresham. They will always cling together."

"You used to like Mr. Mildmay."

"Mr. Mildmay,—yes! If there could be a Mr.

Mildmay in the Cabinet, this trouble would not come upon my shoulders."

"Then I 'm very glad that there can't be a Mr. Mildmay. Why should n't there be as good fish in the sea as ever were caught out of it?"

"When you 've got a good fish you like to make as much of it as you can."

"I suppose Mr. Monk will join you."

"I think we shall ask him. But I am not prepared to discuss men's names as yet."

"You must discuss them with the Duke immediately."

"Probably;—but I had better discuss them with him before I fix my own mind by naming them even to you."

"You 'll bring Mr. Finn in, Plantagenet?"

"Mr. Finn!"

"Yes;—Phineas Finn,—the man who was tried."

"My dear Cora, we have n't come down to that yet. We need not at any rate trouble ourselves about the small fishes till we are sure that we can get big fishes to join us."

"I don't know why he should be a small fish. No man has done better than he has; and if you want a man to stick to you——"

"I don't want a man to stick to me. I want a man to stick to his country."

"You were talking about sympathy."

"Well, yes;—I was. But do not name any one else just at present. The Duke will be here soon, and I would be alone till he comes."

"There is one thing I want to say, Plantagenet."

"What is it?"

"One favour I want to ask."

"Pray do not ask anything for any man just at present."

"It is not anything for any man."

"Nor for any woman."

"It is for a woman,—but one whom I think you would wish to oblige."

"Who is it?" Then she curtseyed, smiling at him drolly, and put her hand upon her breast. "Something for you! What on earth can you want that I can do for you?"

"Will you do it,—if it be reasonable?"

"If I think it reasonable, I certainly will do it."

Then her manner changed altogether and she became serious and almost solemn. "If, as I suppose, all the great places about her Majesty be changed, I should like to be Mistress of the Robes."

"You!" said he, almost startled out of his usual quiet demeanour.

"Why not I? Is not my rank high enough?"

"You burden yourself with the intricacies and subserviences, with the tedium and pomposities of Court life! Cora, you do not know what you are talking about, or what you are proposing for yourself."

"If I am willing to try to undertake a duty why should I be debarred from it any more than you?"

"Because I have put myself into a groove, and ground myself into a mould, and clipped and pared and pinched myself all round,—very ineffectually as I fear,—to fit myself for this thing. You have lived as free as air. You have disdained,—and though I may have grumbled I have still been proud to see you disdain,—to wrap yourself in the swaddling bandages of

Court life. You have ridiculed all those who have been near her Majesty as Court ladies."

"The individuals, Plantagenet, perhaps; but not the office. I am getting older now, and I do not see why I should not begin a new life." She had been somewhat quelled by his unexpected energy, and was at the moment hardly able to answer him with her usual spirit.

"Do not think of it, my dear. You asked whether your rank was high enough. It must be so, as there is, as it happens, none higher. But your position, should it come to pass that your husband is the head of the Government, will be too high. I may say that in no condition should I wish my wife to be subject to other restraint than that which is common to all married women. I should not choose that she should have any duties unconnected with our joint family and home. But as First Minister of the Crown I would altogether object to her holding an office believed to be at my disposal." She looked at him with her large eyes wide open, and then left him without a word. She had no other way of showing her displeasure, for she knew that when he spoke as he had spoken now all argument was unavailing.

The Duke remained an hour alone before he was joined by the other Duke, during which he did not for a moment apply his mind to the subject which might be thought to be most prominent in his thoughts,—the filling up, namely, of a list of his new government. All that he could do in that direction without further assistance had been already done very easily. There were four or five certain names,—names, that is, of certain political friends, and three or four almost equally

certain of men who had been political enemies but who would now clearly be asked to join the ministry. Sir Gregory Grogram, the late Attorney-General, would of course be asked to resume his place; but Sir Timothy Beeswax, who was up to this moment Solicitor-General for the conservatives, would also be invited to retain that which he held. Many details were known, not only to the two dukes who were about to patch up the ministry between them, but to the political world at large,—and were facts upon which the newspapers were able to display their wonderful foresight and general omniscience with their usual confidence. And as to the points which were in doubt,—whether or not, for instance, that consistent old tory Sir Orlando Drought should be asked to put up with the Post-office or should be allowed to remain at the Colonies,—the younger Duke did not care to trouble himself till the elder should have come to his assistance. But his own position and his questionable capacity for filling it,—that occupied all his mind. If nominally first he would be really first. Of so much it seemed to him that his honour required him to assure himself. To be a faineant ruler was in direct antagonism both to his conscience and his predilections. To call himself by a great name before the world, and then to be something infinitely less than that name, would be to him a degradation. But though he felt fixed as to that, he was by no means assured as to that other point, which to most men firm in their resolves as he was, and backed up as he had been by the confidence of others, would be cause of small hesitation. He did doubt his ability to fill that place which it would now be his duty to occupy. He more than

doubted. He told himself again and again that there was wanting to him a certain noble capacity for commanding support and homage from other men. With things and facts he could deal, but human beings had not opened themselves to him. But now it was too late! and yet,—as he said to his wife,—to fail would break his heart! No ambition had prompted him. He was sure of himself there. One only consideration had forced him into this great danger, and that had been the assurance of others that it was his manifest duty to encounter it. And now there was clearly no escape,—no escape compatible with that clean-handed truth from which it was not possible for him to swerve. He might create difficulties in order that through them a way might still be opened to him of restoring to the Queen the commission which had been entrusted to him. He might insist on this or that impossible concession. But the memory of escape such as that would break his heart as surely as the failure.

When the Duke was announced he rose to greet his old friend almost with fervour. "It is a shame," he said, "to bring you out so late. I ought to have gone to you."

"Not at all. It is always the rule in these cases that the man who has most to do should fix himself as well as he can where others may be able to find him." The Duke of St. Bungay was an old man, between seventy and eighty, with hair nearly white, and who on entering the room had to unfold himself out of various coats and comforters. But he was in full possession not only of his intellects, but of his bodily power, showing, as many politicians do show, that the cares of the nation may sit upon a man's shoulders for

many years without breaking or even bending them. For the Duke had belonged to ministries nearly for the last half-century. As the chronicles have also dealt with him no further records of his past life shall now be given.

He had said something about the Queen, expressing gracious wishes for the comfort of her Majesty in all these matters, something of the inconvenience of these political journeys to and fro, something also of the delicacy and difficulty of the operations on hand which were enhanced by the necessity of bringing men together as cordial allies who had hitherto acted with bitter animosity one to another, before the younger Duke said a word. "We may as well," said the elder, "make out some small provisional list, and you can ask those you name to be with you early to-morrow. But perhaps you have already made a list."

"No, indeed. I have not even had a pencil in my hand."

"We may as well begin then," said the elder, facing the table when he saw that his less experienced companion made no attempt at beginning.

"There is something horrible to me in the idea of writing down men's names for such a work as this, just as boys at school used to draw out the elevens for a cricket match." The old stager turned round and stared at the younger politician. "The thing itself is so momentous that one ought to have aid from heaven."

Plantagenet Palliser was the last man from whom the Duke of St. Bungay would have expected romance at any time, and, least of all, at such a time as this. "Aid from heaven you may have," he said, "by saying your prayers; and I don't doubt you ask it for

this and all other things generally. But an angel won't come to tell you who ought to be Chancellor of the Exchequer."

"No angel will, and therefore I wish that I could wash my hands of it." His old friend still stared at him. "It is like sacrilege to me, attempting this without feeling one's own fitness for the work. It unmans me,—this necessity of doing that which I know I cannot do with fitting judgment."

"Your mind has been a little too hard at work to-day."

"It has n't been at work at all. I 've had nothing to do, and have been unable really to think of work. But I feel that chance circumstances have put me into a position for which I am unfit, and which yet I have been unable to avoid. How much better would it be that you should do this alone,—you yourself."

"Utterly out of the question. I do know and think that I always have known my own powers. Neither has my aptitude in debate nor my capacity for work justified me in looking to the premiership. But that, forgive me, is now not worthy of consideration. It is because you do work and can work, and because you have fitted yourself for that continued course of lucid explanation which we now call debate, that men on both sides have called upon you as the best man to come forward in this difficulty. Excuse me, my friend, again if I say that I expect to find your manliness equal to your capacity."

"If I could only escape from it!"

"Psha;—nonsense!" said the old Duke, getting up. "There is such a thing as a conscience with so fine an edge that it will allow a man to do nothing. You 've got to serve your country. On such assistance as I can

give you you know that you may depend with absolute assurance. Now let us get to work. I suppose you would wish that I should take the chair at the Council."

"Certainly;—of course," said the Duke of Omnium, turning to the table. The one practical suggestion had fixed him, and from that moment he gave himself to the work in hand with all his energies. It was not very difficult nor did it take them a very long time. If the future Prime Minister had not his names at his fingers' ends, the future President of the Council had them. Eight men were soon named whom it was thought well that the Duke of Omnium should consult early in the morning as to their willingness to fill certain places. "Each one of them may have some other one or some two whom he may insist on bringing with him," said the elder Duke; "and though of course you cannot yield to the pressure in every such case, it will be wise to allow yourself scope for some amount of concession. You 'll find they 'll shake down after the usual amount of resistance and compliance. No;—don't you leave your house to-morrow to see anybody unless it be Mr. Daubeny or her Majesty. I 'll come to you at two, and if her Grace will give me luncheon I 'll lunch with her. Good night, and don't think too much of the bigness of the thing. I remember dear old Lord Brock telling me how much more difficult it was to find a good coachman than a good Secretary of State." The Duke of Omnium, as he sat thinking of things for the next hour in his chair, succeeded only in proving to himself that Lord Brock never ought to have been Prime Minister of England after having ventured to make so poor a joke on so solemn a subject.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW CAREER.

By the time that the Easter holidays were over,—holidays which had been used so conveniently for the making of a new government,—the work of getting a team together had been accomplished by the united energy of the two dukes and other friends. The filling up of the great places had been by no means so difficult or so tedious,—nor indeed the cause of half so many heartburns,—as the completion of the list of the subordinates. Noblesse oblige. The Secretaries of State, and the Chancellors, and the First Lords, selected from this or the other party, felt that the eyes of mankind were upon them, and that it behoved them to assume a virtue if they had it not. They were habitually indifferent to self-exaltation, and allowed themselves to be thrust into this or that unfitting hole, professing that the Queen's Government and the good of the country were their only considerations. Lord Thrift made way for Sir Orlando Drought at the Admiralty, because it was felt on all sides that Sir Orlando could not join the new composite party without high place. And the same grace was shown in regard to Lord Drummond, who remained at the Colonies, keeping the office to which he had been lately transferred under Mr. Daubeny. And Sir Gregory Grogram said not a word, whatever he may have thought, when he

was told that Mr. Daubeny's Lord Chancellor, Lord Ramsden, was to keep the seals. Sir Gregory did, no doubt, think very much about it; for legal offices have a signification differing much from that which attaches itself to places simply political. A Lord Chancellor becomes a peer, and on going out of office enjoys a large pension. When the woolsack has been reached there comes an end of doubt, and a beginning of ease. Sir Gregory was not a young man, and this was a terrible blow. But he bore it manfully, saying not a word when the Duke spoke to him; but he became convinced from that moment that no more inefficient lawyer ever sat upon the English bench, or a more presumptuous politician in the British Parliament, than Lord Ramsden.

The real struggle, however, lay in the appropriate distribution of the Rattlers and the Robys, the Fitzgibbons and the Macphersons among the subordinate offices of State. Mr. Macpherson and Mr. Roby, with a host of others who had belonged to Mr. Daubeny, were prepared, as they declared from the first, to lend their assistance to the Duke. They had consulted Mr. Daubeny on the subject, and Mr. Daubeny told them that their duty lay in that direction. At the first blush of the matter the arrangement took the form of a gracious tender from themselves to a statesman called upon to act in very difficult circumstances,—and they were thanked accordingly by the Duke with something of real cordial gratitude. But when the actual adjustment of things was in hand, the Duke, having but little power of assuming a soft countenance and using soft words while his heart was bitter, felt on more than one occasion inclined to withdraw his thanks. He was

astounded not so much by the pretensions as by the unblushing assertion of these pretensions in reference to places which he had been innocent enough to think were always bestowed at any rate without direct application. He had measured himself rightly when he told the elder Duke in one of those anxious conversations which had been held before the attempt was made, that long as he had been in office himself he did not know what was the way of bestowing office. "Two gentlemen have been here this morning," he said one day to the Duke of St. Bungay, "one on the heels of the other, each assuring me not only that the whole stability of the enterprise depends on my giving a certain office to him,—but actually telling me to my face that I had promised it to him!" The old statesman laughed. "To be told within the same half-hour by two men that I had made promises to each of them inconsistent with each other!"

"Who were the two men?"

"Mr. Rattler and Mr. Roby."

"I am assured that they are inseparable since the work was begun. They always had a leaning to each other, and now I hear they pass their time between the steps of the Carlton and Reform Clubs."

"But what am I to do? One must be Patronage Secretary, no doubt."

"They 're both good men in their way, you know."

"But why do they come to me with their mouths open, like dogs craving a bone? It used not to be so. Of course men were always anxious for office as they are now."

"Well; yes. We 've heard of that before to-day, I think."

"But I don't think any man ever ventured to ask Mr. Mildmay."

"Time had done much for him in consolidating his authority, and perhaps the present world is less reticent in its eagerness than it was in his younger days. I doubt, however, whether it is more dishonest, and whether struggles were not made quite as disgraceful to the strugglers as anything that is done now. You can't alter the men, and you must use them." The younger Duke sat down and sighed over the degenerate patriotism of the age.

But at last even the Rattlers and Robys were fixed, if not satisfied, and a complete list of the ministry appeared in all the newspapers. Though the thing had been long a doing, still it had come suddenly,—so that at the first proposition to form a Coalition Ministry, the newspapers had hardly known whether to assist or to oppose the scheme. There was no doubt, in the minds of all these editors and contributors, the teaching of a tradition that coalitions of this kind have been generally feeble, sometimes disastrous, and on occasions even disgraceful. When a man, perhaps through a long political life, has bound himself to a certain code of opinions, how can he change that code at a moment? And when at the same moment, together with the change, he secures power, patronage, and pay, how shall the public voice absolve him? But then again men, who have by the work of their lives grown into a certain position in the country and have unconsciously but not therefore less actually made themselves indispensable either to this side in politics or to that, cannot free themselves altogether from the responsibility of managing them when a period comes such as

that now reached. This also the newspapers perceived; and having, since the commencement of the session, been very loud in exposing the disgraceful collapse of Government affairs, could hardly refuse their support to any attempt at a feasible arrangement. When it was first known that the Duke of Omnium had consented to make the attempt, they had both on one side and the other been loud in his praise, going so far as to say that he was the only man in England who could do the work. It was probably this encouragement which had enabled the new Premier to go on with an undertaking which was personally distasteful to him, and for which from day to day he believed himself to be less and less fit. But when the newspapers told him that he was the only man for the occasion, how could he be justified in crediting himself in preference to them?

The work in Parliament began under the new auspices with great tranquillity. That there would soon come causes of hot blood,—the English Church, the county suffrage, the income tax, and further education questions,—all men knew who knew anything. But for the moment, for the month even, perhaps for the session, there was to be peace, with full latitude for the performance of routine duties. There was so to say no opposition, and at first it seemed that one special bench in the House of Commons would remain unoccupied. But after a day or two,—on one of which Mr. Daubeny had been seen sitting just below the gangway,—that gentleman returned to the place usually held by the Prime Minister's rival, saying with a smile that it might be for the convenience of the House that the seat should be utilised. Mr. Gresham at this

time had, with declared purpose, asked and obtained the Speaker's leave of absence and was abroad. Who should lead the House? That had been a great question, caused by the fact that the Prime Minister was in the House of Lords;—and what office should the leader hold? Mr. Monk had consented to take the Exchequer, but the right to sit opposite to the Treasury Box and to consider himself for the time the principal spirit in that chamber was at last assigned to Sir Orlando Drought. "It will never do," said Mr. Rattler to Mr. Roby. "I don't mean to say anything against Drought, who has always been a very useful man to your party;—but he lacks something of the position."

"The fact is," said Roby, "that we 've trusted to two men so long that we don't know how to suppose any one else big enough to fill their places. Monk would n't have done. The House does n't care about Monk."

"I always thought it should be Wilson, and so I told the Duke. He had an idea that it should be one of your men."

"I think he 's right there," said Roby. "There ought to be something like a fair division. Individuals might be content, but the party would be dissatisfied. For myself, I 'd have sooner stayed out as an independent member, but Daubeny said that he thought I was bound to make myself useful."

"I told the Duke from the beginning," said Rattler, "that I did n't think that I could be of any service to him. Of course I would support him, but I had been too thoroughly a party man for a new movement of this kind. But he said just the same;—that he considered I was bound to join him. I asked Gresham,

and when Gresham said so too, of course I had no help for it."

Neither of these excellent public servants had told a lie in this. Some such conversations as those reported had passed;—but a man does n't lie when he exaggerates an emphasis, or even when he gives by a tone a meaning to a man's words exactly opposite to that which another tone would convey. Or, if he does lie in doing so, he does not know that he lies. Mr. Rattler had gone back to his old office at the Treasury and Mr. Roby had been forced to content himself with the Secretaryship at the Admiralty. But, as the old Duke had said, they were close friends, and prepared to fight together any battle which might keep them in their present position.

Many of the cares of office the Prime Minister did succeed in shuffling off altogether on to the shoulders of his elder friend. He would not concern himself with the appointment of ladies, about whom he said he knew nothing, and as to whose fitness and claims he professed himself to be as ignorant as the office messenger. The offers were of course made in the usual form, as though coming direct from the Queen, through the Prime Minister;—but the selections were in truth effected by the old Duke in council with ——, an illustrious personage. The matter affected our Duke,—only in so far that he could not get out of his mind that strange application from his own wife. "That she should have even dreamed of it!" he would say to himself, not yet having acquired sufficient experience of his fellow creatures to be aware how wonderfully temptations will affect even those who appear to be least subject to them. The town horse, used to gaudy

trappings, no doubt despises the work of his country brother; but yet, now and again, there comes upon him a sudden desire to plough. The desire for ploughing had come upon the Duchess, but the Duke could not understand it.

He perceived, however, in spite of the multiplicity of his official work, that his refusal sat heavily on his wife's breast, and that, though she spoke no further word, she brooded over her injury. And his heart was sad within him when he thought that he had vexed her,—loving her as he did with all his heart, but with a heart that was never demonstrative. When she was unhappy he was miserable, though he would hardly know the cause of his misery. Her ridicule and raillery he could bear, though they stung him; but her sorrow, if ever she were sorrowful, or her sullenness, if ever she were sullen, upset him altogether. He was in truth so soft of heart that he could not bear the discomfort of the one person in the world who seemed to him to be near to him. He had expressly asked her for her sympathy in the business he had on hand,—thereby going much beyond his usual coldness of manner. She, with an eagerness which might have been expected from her, had promised that she would slave for him, if slavery were necessary. Then she had made her request, had been refused, and was now moody. "The Duchess of —— is to be Mistress of the Robes," he said to her one day. He had gone to her, up to her own room, before he dressed for dinner, having devoted much more time than as Prime Minister he ought to have done to a resolution that he would make things straight with her, and to the best way of doing it.

"So I am told. She ought to know her way about the place, as I remember she was at the same work when I was a girl of eleven."

"That 's not so very long ago, Cora."

"Silverbridge is older now than I was then, and I think that makes it a very long time ago." Lord Silverbridge was the Duke's eldest son.

"But what does it matter? If she began her career in the time of George the Fourth what is it to you?"

"Nothing on earth,—only that she did in truth begin her career in the time of George the Third. I 'm sure she 's nearer sixty than fifty."

"I 'm glad to see you remember your dates so well."

"It 's a pity she should not remember hers in the way she dresses," said the Duchess.

This was marvellous to him,—that his wife, who as Lady Glencora Palliser had been so conspicuous for a wild disregard of social rules as to be looked upon by many as an enemy of her own class, should be so depressed by not being allowed to be the Queen's head servant as to descend to personal invective! "I 'm afraid," said he, attempting to smile, "that it won't come within the compass of my office to effect or even to propose any radical change in her Grace's apparel. But don't you think that you and I can afford to ignore all that?"

"I can certainly. She may be an antiquated Eve for me."

"I hope, Cora, you are not still disappointed because I did not agree with you when you spoke about the place for yourself."

"Not because you did not agree with me,—but because you did not think me fit to be trusted with any

judgment of my own. I don't know why I 'm always to be looked upon as different from other women,—as though I were half a savage."

"You are what you have made yourself, and I have always rejoiced that you are as you are, fresh, untrammelled, without many prejudices which afflict other ladies, and free from bonds by which they are cramped and confined. Of course such a turn of character is subject to certain dangers of its own."

"There is no doubt about the dangers. The chances are that when I see her Grace I shall tell her what I think about her."

"You will I am sure say nothing unkind to a lady who is supposed to be in the place she now fills by my authority. But do not let us quarrel about an old woman."

"I won't quarrel with you even about a young one."

"I cannot be at ease within myself while I think you are resenting my refusal. You do not know how constantly I carry you about with me."

"You carry a very unnecessary burden then," she said. But he could tell at once from the altered tone of her voice, and from the light of her eye as he glanced into her face, that her anger about "The Robes" was appeased.

"I have done as you asked about a friend of yours," he said. This occurred just before the final and perfected list of the new men had appeared in all the newspapers.

"What friend?"

"Mr. Finn is to go to Ireland."

"Go to Ireland!—How do you mean?"

"It is looked upon as being very great promotion.

Indeed I am told that he is considered to be the luckiest man in all the scramble."

"You don't mean as Chief Secretary?"

"Yes, I do. He certainly could n't go as Lord Lieutenant."

"But they said that Barrington Erle was going to Ireland."

"Well; yes. I don't know that you 'd be interested by all the ins and outs of it. But Mr. Erle declined. It seems that Mr. Erle is after all the one man in Parliament modest enough not to consider himself to be fit for any place that can be offered to him."

"Poor Barrington! He does not like the idea of crossing the Channel so often. I quite sympathise with him. And so Phineas is to be Secretary for Ireland! Not in the Cabinet?"

"No;—not in the Cabinet. It is not by any means usual that he should be."

"That is promotion, and I am glad! Poor Phineas! I hope they won't murder him, or anything of that kind. They do murder people, you know, sometimes."

"He 's an Irishman himself."

"That 's just the reason why they should. He must put up with that of course. I wonder whether she 'll like going. They 'll be able to spend money, which they always like, over there. He comes backwards and forwards every week,—does n't he?"

"Not quite that, I believe."

"I shall miss her, if she has to stay away long. I know you don't like her."

"I do like her. She has always behaved well, both to me and to my uncle."

"She was an angel to him,—and to you too if you only knew it. I dare say you 're sending him to Ireland so as to get her away from me." This she said with a smile, as though not meaning it altogether, but yet half meaning it.

"I have asked him to undertake the office," said the Duke solemnly, "because I am told that he is fit for it. But I did have some pleasure in proposing it to him because I thought that it would please you."

"It does please me, and I won't be cross any more, and the Duchess of —— may wear her clothes just as she pleases, or go without them. And as for Mrs. Finn, I don't see why she should be with him always when he goes. You can quite understand how necessary she is to me. But she is in truth the only woman in London to whom I can say what I think. And it is a comfort, you know, to have some one."

In this way the domestic peace of the Prime Minister was readjusted, and that sympathy and co-operation for which he had first asked was accorded to him. It may be a question whether on the whole the Duchess did not work harder than he did. She did not at first dare to expound to him those grand ideas which she had conceived in regard to magnificence and hospitality. She said nothing of any extraordinary expenditure of money. But she set herself to work after her own fashion, making to him suggestions as to dinners and evening receptions, to which he objected only on the score of time. "You must eat your dinner somewhere," she said, "and you need only come in just before we sit down, and go into your own room if you please without coming upstairs at all. I can at any rate do that part of it for you." And she did do that

part of it with marvellous energy all through the month of May,—so that by the end of the month, within six weeks of the time at which she first heard of the Coalition Ministry, all the world had begun to talk of the Prime Minister's dinners, and of the receptions given by the Prime Minister's wife.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. DICK'S DINNER-PARTY.—NO. I.

Our readers must not forget the troubles of poor Emily Wharton amidst the gorgeous festivities of the new Prime Minister. Throughout April and May she did not once see Ferdinand Lopez. It may be remembered that on the night when the matter was discussed between her and her father, she promised him that she would not do so without his permission,—saying, however, at the same time very openly that her happiness depended on such permission being given to her. For two or three weeks not a word further was said between her and her father on the subject, and he had endeavoured to banish the subject from his mind,—feeling no doubt that if nothing further were ever said it would be so much the better. But then his daughter referred to the matter,—very plainly, with a simple question, and without disguise of her own feeling, but still in a manner which he could not bring himself to rebuke. "Aunt Harriet has asked me once or twice to go there of an evening, when you have been out. I have declined because I thought Mr. Lopez would be there. Must I tell her that I am not to meet Mr. Lopez, papa?"

"If she has him there on purpose to throw him in your way, I shall think very badly of her."

"But he has been in the habit of being there, papa. Of course if you are decided about this, it is better that I should not see him."

"Did I not tell you that I was decided?"

"You said you would make some further inquiry and speak to me again." Now Mr. Wharton had made inquiry, but had learned nothing to reassure himself;—neither had he been able to learn any fact, putting his finger on which he could point out to his daughter clearly that the marriage would be unsuitable for her. Of the man's ability and position, as certainly also of his manners, the world at large seemed to speak well. He had been black-balled at two clubs, but apparently without any defined reason. He lived as though he possessed a handsome income, and yet was in no degree fast or flashy. He was supposed to be an intimate friend of Mr. Mills Happerton, one of the partners in the world-famous commercial house of Hunky & Sons, which dealt in millions. Indeed there had been at one time a rumour that he was going to be taken into the house of Hunky & Sons as a junior partner. It was evident that many people had been favourably impressed by his outward demeanour, by his mode of talk, and by his way of living. But no one knew anything about him. With regard to his material position Mr. Wharton could of course ask direct questions if he pleased, and require evidence as to alleged property. But he felt that by doing so he would abandon his right to object to the man as being a Portuguese stranger, and he did not wish to have Ferdinand Lopez as a son-in-law, even though he should be a partner in Hunky & Sons, and able to maintain a gorgeous palace at South Kensington.

"I have made inquiry."

"Well, papa?"

"I don't know anything about him. Nobody knows anything about him."

"Could you not ask himself anything you want to know? If I might see him I would ask him."

"That would not do at all."

"It comes to this, papa, that I am to sever myself from a man to whom I am attached, and whom you must admit that I have been allowed to meet from day to day with no caution that his intimacy was unpleasant to you, because he is called—Lopez."

"It is n't that at all. There are English people of that name; but he is n't an Englishman."

"Of course if you say so, papa, it must be so. I have told Aunt Harriet that I consider myself to be prohibited from meeting Mr. Lopez by what you have said; but I think, papa, you are a little—cruel to me."

"Cruel to you!" said Mr. Wharton, almost bursting into tears.

"I am as ready to obey as a child;—but, not being a child, I think I ought to have a reason." To this Mr. Wharton made no further immediate answer, but pulled his hair, and shuffled his feet about, and then escaped out of the room.

A few days afterwards his sister-in-law attacked him. "Are we to understand, Mr. Wharton, that Emily is not to meet Mr. Lopez again? It makes it very unpleasant, because he had been intimate at our house."

"I never said a word about her not meeting him. Of course I do not wish that any meeting should be contrived between them."

"As it stands now it is prejudicial to her. Of course

it cannot but be observed, and it is so odd that a young lady should be forbidden to meet a certain man. It looks so unpleasant for her,—as though she had misbehaved herself."

"I have never thought so for a moment."

"Of course you have not. How could you have thought so, Mr. Wharton?"

"I say that I never did."

"What must he think when he knows,—as of course he does know,—that she has been forbidden to meet him? It must make him fancy that he is very much made of. All that is so very bad for a girl! Indeed it is, Mr. Wharton." Of course there was absolute dishonesty in all this on the part of Mrs. Roby. She was true enough to Emily's lover,—too true to him; but she was false to Emily's father. If Emily would have yielded to her she would have arranged meetings at her own house between the lovers altogether in opposition to the father. Nevertheless there was a show of reason about what she said which Mr. Wharton was unable to overcome. And at the same time there was a reality about his girl's sorrow which overcame him. He had never hitherto consulted any one about anything in his family, having always found his own information and intellect sufficient for his own affairs. But now he felt grievously in want of some pillar,—some female pillar on which he could lean. He did not know all Mrs. Roby's iniquities; but still he felt that she was not the pillar of which he was in need. There was no such pillar for his use, and he was driven to acknowledge to himself that in this distressing position he must be guided by his own strength, and his own lights. He thought it all out as well as he could in his own cham-

ber, allowing his book or his brief to lie idle beside him for many a half-hour. But he was much puzzled both as to the extent of his own authority and the manner in which it should be used. He certainly had not desired his daughter not to meet the man. He could understand that unless some affront had been offered such an edict enforced as to the conduct of a young lady would induce all her acquaintance to suppose that she was either very much in love or else very prone to misbehave herself. He feared, indeed, that she was very much in love, but it would not be prudent to tell her secret to all the world. Perhaps it would be better that she should meet him,—always with the understanding that she was not to accept from him any peculiar attention. If she would be obedient in one particular, she would probably be so in the other;—and, indeed, he did not at all doubt her obedience. She would obey, but would take care to show him that she was made miserable by obeying. He began to foresee that he had a bad time before him.

And then as he still sat idle, thinking of it all, his mind wandered off to another view of the subject. Could he be happy, or even comfortable, if she were unhappy? Of course he endeavoured to convince himself that if he were bold, determined, and dictatorial with her, it would only be in order that her future happiness might be secured. A parent is often bound to disregard the immediate comfort of a child. But then was he sure that he was right? He of course had his own way of looking at life, but was it reasonable that he should force his girl to look at things with his eyes? The man was distasteful to him as being unlike his idea of an English gentleman, and as being

without those far-reaching fibres and roots by which he thought that the solidity and stability of a human tree should be assured. But the world was changing around him every day. Royalty was marrying out of its degree. Peers' sons were looking only for money. And, more than that, peers' daughters were bestowing themselves on Jews and shopkeepers. Had he not better make the usual inquiry about the man's means, and, if satisfied on that head, let the girl do as she would? Added to all this there was growing on him a feeling that ultimately youth would as usual triumph over age, and that he would be beaten. If that were so, why worry himself, or why worry her?

On the day after Mrs. Roby's attack upon him he again saw that lady, having on this occasion sent round to ask her to come to him. "I want you to understand that I put no embargo on Emily as to meeting Mr. Lopez. I can trust her fully. I do not wish her to encourage his attentions, but I by no means wish her to avoid him."

"Am I to tell Emily what you say?"

"I will tell her myself. I think it better to say as much to you, as you seemed to be embarrassed by the fear that they might happen to see each other in your drawing-room."

"It was rather awkward;—was n't it?"

"I have spoken now because you seemed to think so." His manner to her was not very pleasant, but Mrs. Roby had known him for many years, and did not care very much for his manner. She had an object to gain, and could put up with a good deal for the sake of her object.

"Very well. Then I shall know how to act. But,

Mr. Wharton, I must say this, you know Emily has a will of her own, and you must not hold me responsible for anything that may occur." As soon as he heard this he almost resolved to withdraw the concession he had made;—but he did not do so.

Very soon after this there came a special invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Roby, asking the Whartons, father and daughter, to dine with them round the corner. It was quite a special invitation, because it came in the form of a card,—which was unusual between the two families. But the dinner was too, in some degree, a special dinner,—as Emily was enabled to explain to her father, the whole speciality having been fully detailed to herself by her aunt. Mr. Roby, whose belongings were not generally aristocratic, had one great connection with whom, after many years of quarrelling, he had lately come into amity. This was his half-brother, considerably older than himself, and was no other than that Mr. Roby who was now Secretary to the Admiralty, and who in the last conservative government had been one of the Secretaries to the Treasury. The old Mr. Roby of all, now long since gathered to his fathers, had had two wives and two sons. The elder son had not been left as well off as friends, or perhaps as he himself, could have wished. But he had risen in the world by his wits, had made his way into Parliament, and had become, as all readers of these chronicles know, a staff of great strength to his party. But he had always been a poor man. His periods of office had been much shorter than those of his friend Rattler, and his other sources of income had not been certain. His younger half-brother, who, as far as the great world was concerned, had none of

his elder brother's advantages, had been endowed with some fortune from his mother, and,—in an evil hour for both of them,—had lent the politician money. As one consequence of this transaction, they had not spoken to each other for years. On this quarrel Mrs. Roby was always harping with her own husband,—not taking his part. Her Roby, her Dick, had indeed the means of supporting her with fair comfort, but had, of his own, no power of introducing her to that sort of society for which her soul craved. But Mr. Thomas Roby was a great man,—though unfortunately poor,—and moved in high circles. Because they had lent their money,—which no doubt was lost forever,—why should they also lose the advantages of such a connection? Would it not be wiser rather to take the debt as a basis whereon to found a claim for special fraternal observation and kindred social intercourse? Dick, who was fond of his money, would not for a long time look at the matter in this light, but harassed his brother from time to time by applications which were quite useless, and which by the acerbity of their language altogether shut Mrs. Roby out from the good things which might have accrued to her from so distinguished a brother-in-law. But when it came to pass that Thomas Roby was confirmed in office by the Coalition which has been mentioned, Mrs. Dick became very energetic. She went herself to the official hero and told him how desirous she was of peace. Nothing more should be said about the money,—at any rate for the present. Let brothers be brothers. And so it came to pass that the Secretary to the Admiralty with his wife were to dine in Berkeley Street, and that Mr. Wharton was asked to meet them.

"I don't particularly want to meet Mr. Thomas Roby," the old barrister said.

"They want you to come," said Emily, "because there has been some family reconciliation. You usually do go once or twice a year."

"I suppose it may as well be done," said Mr. Wharton.

"I think, papa, that they mean to ask Mr. Lopez," said Emily demurely.

"I told you before that I don't want to have you banished from your aunt's home by any man," said the father. So the matter was settled, and the invitation was accepted. This was just at the end of May, at which time people were beginning to say that the Coalition was a success, and some wise men to predict that at last fortuitous parliamentary atoms had so come together by accidental connection, that a ministry had been formed which might endure for a dozen years. Indeed there was no reason why there should be any end to a ministry built on such a foundation. Of course this was very comfortable to such men as Mr. Roby, so that the Admiralty Secretary when he entered his sister-in-law's drawing-room was suffused with that rosy hue of human bliss which a feeling of triumph bestows. "Yes," said he, in answer to some would-be facetious remark from his brother, "I think we have weathered that storm pretty well. It does seem rather odd, my sitting cheek by jowl with Mr. Monk and gentlemen of that kidney; but they don't bite. I 've got one of our own set at the head of our own office, and he leads the House. I think upon the whole we 've got a little the best of it." This was listened to by Mr. Wharton with great disgust,—for Mr. Wharton

was a tory of the old school, who hated compromises, and abhorred in his heart the class of politicians to whom politics were a profession rather than a creed.

Mr. Roby Senior, having escaped from the House, was of course the last, and had indeed kept all the other guests waiting half an hour,—as becomes a parliamentary magnate in the heat of the session. Mr. Wharton, who had been early, saw all the other guests arrive, and among them Mr. Ferdinand Lopez. There was also Mr. Mills Happerton,—partner in Hunky & Sons, —with his wife, respecting whom Mr. Wharton at once concluded that he was there as being the friend of Ferdinand Lopez. If so, how much influence must Ferdinand Lopez have in that house! Nevertheless, Mr. Mills Happerton was in his way a great man, and a credit to Mrs. Roby. And there were Sir Damask and Lady Monogram, who were people moving quite in the first circles. Sir Damask shot pigeons, and so did also Dick Roby,—whence had perhaps arisen an intimacy. But Lady Monogram was not at all a person to dine with Mrs. Dick Roby without other cause than this. But a great official among one's acquaintance can do so much for one! It was probable that Lady Monogram's presence was among the first fruits of the happy family reconciliation that had taken place. Then there was Mrs. Leslie, a pretty widow, rather poor, who was glad to receive civilities from Mrs. Roby, and was Emily Wharton's pet aversion. Mrs. Leslie had said impertinent things to her about Ferdinand Lopez, and she had snubbed Mrs. Leslie. But Mrs. Leslie was serviceable to Mrs. Roby, and had now been asked to her great dinner-party.

But the two most illustrious guests have not yet

been mentioned. Mrs. Roby had secured a lord,—an absolute peer of Parliament! This was no less a man than Lord Mongrober, whose father had been a great judge in the early part of the century, and had been made a peer. The Mongrober estates were not supposed to be large, nor was the Mongrober influence at this time extensive. But this nobleman was seen about a good deal in society when the dinners given were supposed to be worth eating. He was a fat, silent, red-faced, elderly gentleman, who said very little, and who when he did speak seemed always to be in an ill-humour. He would now and then make ill-natured remarks about his friends' wines, as suggesting '68 when a man would boast of his '48 claret; and when costly dainties were supplied for his use, would remark that such and such a dish was very well at some other time of the year. So that ladies attentive to their tables and hosts proud of their cellars would almost shake in their shoes before Lord Mongrober. And it may also be said that Lord Mongrober never gave any chance of retaliation by return dinners. There lived not the man or woman who had dined with Lord Mongrober. But yet the Robys of London were glad to entertain him; and the Mrs. Robys, when he was coming, would urge their cooks to superhuman energies by the mention of his name.

And there was Lady Eustace! Of Lady Eustace it was impossible to say whether her beauty, her wit, her wealth, or the remarkable history of her past life, most recommended her to such hosts and hostesses as Mr. and Mrs. Roby. As her history may be already known to some, no details of it shall be repeated here. At this moment she was free from all marital persecu-

tion, and was very much run after by a certain set in society. There were others again who declared that no decent man or woman ought to meet her. On the score of lovers there was really little or nothing to be said against her; but she had implicated herself in an unfortunate second marriage, and then there was that old story about the jewels! But there was no doubt about her money and her good looks, and some considered her to be clever. These completed the list of Mrs. Roby's great dinner-party.

Mr. Wharton, who had arrived early, could not but take notice that Lopez, who soon followed him into the room, had at once fallen into conversation with Emily, as though there had never been any difficulty in the matter. The father, standing on the rug and pretending to answer the remarks made to him by Dick Roby, could see that Emily said but little. The man, however, was so much at his ease that there was no necessity for her to exert herself. Mr. Wharton hated him for being at his ease. Had he appeared to have been rebuffed by the circumstances of his position the prejudices of the old man would have been lessened. By degrees the guests came. Lord Mongrober stood also on the rug, dumb, with a look of intense impatience for his food, hardly ever condescending to answer the little attempts at conversation made by Mrs. Dick. Lady Eustace gushed into the room, kissing Mrs. Dick and afterwards kissing her great friend of the moment, Mrs. Leslie, who followed. She then looked as though she meant to kiss Lord Mongrober, whom she playfully and almost familiarly addressed. But Lord Mongrober only grunted. Then came Sir Damask and Lady Monogram, and Dick at once be-

gan about his pigeons. Sir Damask, who was the most good-natured man in the world, interested himself at once and became energetic, but Lady Monogram looked round the room carefully, and seeing Lady Eustace turned up her nose, nor did she care much for meeting Lord Mongrober. If she had been taken in as to the Admiralty Robys, then would she let the junior Robys know what she thought about it. Mills Happerton with his wife caused the frown on Lady Monogram's brow to loosen itself a little, for, so great was the wealth and power of the house of Hunky & Sons, that Mr. Mills Happerton was no doubt a feature at any dinner-party. Then came the Admiralty Secretary with his wife, and the order for dinner was given.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. DICK'S DINNER-PARTY.—NO. II.

DICK walked downstairs with Lady Monogram. There had been some doubt whether of right he should not have taken Lady Eustace, but it was held by Mrs. Dick that her ladyship had somewhat impaired her right by the eccentricities of her career, and also that she would amiably pardon any little wrong against her of that kind,—whereas Lady Monogram was a person to be much considered. Then followed Sir Damask with Lady Eustace. They seemed to be paired so well together that there could be no doubt about them. The ministerial Roby, who was really the hero of the night, took Mrs. Happerton, and our friend Mr. Wharton took the Secretary's wife. All that had been easy,—so easy that fate had good-naturedly arranged things which are sometimes difficult of management. But then there came an embarrassment. Of course it would in a usual way be right that a married man as was Mr. Happerton should be assigned to the widow Mrs. Leslie, and that the only two "young" people,—in the usual sense of the word,—should go down to dinner together. But Mrs. Roby was at first afraid of Mr. Wharton, and planned it otherwise. When, however, the last moment came she plucked up courage, gave Mrs. Leslie to the great commercial

man, and with a brave smile asked Lopez to give his arm to the lady he loved. It is sometimes so hard to manage these "little things," said she to Lord Mongrober as she put her hand upon his arm. His lordship had been kept standing in that odious drawing-room for more than half an hour waiting for a man whom he regarded as a poor Treasury hack, and was by no means in a good humour. Dick Roby's wine was no doubt good, but he was not prepared to purchase it at such a price as this. "Things always get confused when you have waited an hour for any one,"—he said. "What can one do, you know, when the House is sitting?" said the lady apologetically. "Of course you lords can get away, but then you have nothing to do." Lord Mongrober grunted, meaning to imply by his grunt that any one would be very much mistaken who supposed that he had any work to do because he was a peer of Parliament.

Lopez and Emily were seated next to each other, and immediately opposite to them was Mr. Wharton. Certainly nothing fraudulent had been intended on this occasion,—or it would have been arranged that the father should sit on the same side of the table with the lover, so that he should see nothing of what was going on. But it seemed to Mr. Wharton as though he had been positively swindled by his sister-in-law. There they sat opposite to him, talking to each other apparently with thoroughly mutual confidence, the very two persons whom he most especially desired to keep apart. He had not a word to say to either of the ladies near him. He endeavoured to keep his eyes away from his daughter as much as possible, and to divert his ears from their conversation;—but he could not but

look and he could not but listen. Not that he really heard a sentence. Emily's voice hardly reached him, and Lopez understood the game he was playing much too well to allow his voice to travel. And he looked as though his position were the most commonplace in the world, and as though he had nothing of more than ordinary interest to say to his neighbour. Mr. Wharton, as he sat there, almost made up his mind that he would leave his practice, give up his chambers, abandon even his club, and take his daughter at once to, —to;—it did not matter where, so that the place should be very distant from Manchester Square. There could be no other remedy for this evil.

Lopez, though he talked throughout the whole of dinner,—turning sometimes indeed to Mrs. Leslie, who sat at his left hand,—said very little that all the world might not have heard. But he did say one such word. "It has been so dreary to me, the last month!" Emily of course had no answer to make to this. She could not tell him that her desolation had been infinitely worse than his, and that she had sometimes felt as though her very heart would break. "I wonder whether it must always be like this with me," he said, —and then he went back to the theatres, and other ordinary conversation.

"I suppose you 've got to the bottom of that champagne you used to have," said Lord Mongrober, roaring across the table to his host, holding his glass in his hand, and with strong marks of disapprobation on his face.

"The very same wine as we were drinking when your lordship last did me the honour of dining here," said Dick. Lord Mongrober raised his eyebrows, shook his head and put down the glass.

"Shall we try another bottle?" asked Mrs. Dick with solicitude.

"Oh no;—it 'd be all the same, I know. I 'll just take a little dry sherry if you have it." The man came with the decanter. "No, dry sherry;—dry sherry," said his lordship. The man was confounded, Mrs. Dick was at her wits' ends, and everything was in confusion. Lord Mongrober was not the man to be kept waiting by a Government subordinate without exacting some penalty for such ill-treatment.

"'Is lordship is a little out of sorts," whispered Dick to Lady Monogram.

"Very much out of sorts it seems."

"And the worst of it is there is n't a better glass of wine in London, and 'is lordship knows it."

"I suppose that 's what he comes for," said Lady Monogram, being quite as uncivil in her way as the nobleman.

"'E 's like a good many others. He knows where he can get a good dinner. After all there 's no attraction like that. Of course a 'andsome woman won't admit that, Lady Monogram."

"I will not admit it at any rate, Mr. Roby."

"But I don't doubt Monogram is as careful as any one else to get the best cook he can, and takes a good deal of trouble about his wine too. Mongrober is very unfair about that champagne. It came out of Madame Cliquot's cellars before the war, and I gave Sprott & Burlinghammer 110*s.* for it."

"Indeed!"

"I don't think there are a dozen men in London can give you such a glass of wine as that. What do you say about that champagne, Monogram?"

"Very tidy wine," said Sir Damask.

"I should think it is. I gave 110*s.* for it before the war. 'Is lordship 's got a fit of the gout coming, I suppose."

But Sir Damask was engaged with his neighbour Lady Eustace. "Of all things I should so like to see a pigeon match," said Lady Eustace. "I have heard about them all my life. Only I suppose it is n't quite proper for a lady."

"Oh dear, yes."

"The darling little pigeons! They do sometimes escape, don't they? I hope they escape sometimes. I 'll go any day you 'll make up a party,—if Lady Monogram will join us." Sir Damask said that he would arrange it, making up his mind, however, at the same time that this last stipulation, if insisted on, would make the thing impracticable.

Roby the ministerialist, sitting at the end of the table between his sister-in-law and Mrs. Happerton, was very confidential respecting the Government and parliamentary affairs in general. "Yes, indeed;—of course it 's a coalition, but I don't see why we should n't go on very well. As to the Duke, I 've always had the greatest possible respect for him. The truth is there 's nothing special to be done at the present moment, and there 's no reason why we should n't agree and divide the good things between us. The Duke has got some craze of his own about decimal coinage. He 'll amuse himself with that; but it won't come to anything, and it won't hurt us."

"Is n't the Duchess giving a great many parties?" asked Mrs. Happerton.

"Well;—yes. That kind of thing used to be done

in old Lady Brock's time, and the Duchess is repeating it. There 's no end to their money, you know. But it 's rather a bore for the persons who have to go." The ministerial Roby knew well how he would make his sister-in-law's mouth water by such an allusion as this to the great privilege of entering the Prime Minister's mansion in Carlton Terrace.

"I suppose you in the Government are always asked."

"We are expected to go too, and are watched pretty close. Lady Glen, as we used to call her, has the eyes of Argus. And of course we who used to be on the other side are especially bound to pay her observance."

"Don't you like the Duchess?" asked Mrs. Happerton.

"Oh yes;—I like her very well. She 's mad, you know,—mad as a hatter,—and no one can ever guess what freak may come next. One always feels that she 'll do something sooner or later that will startle all the world."

"There was a queer story once,—was n't there?" asked Mrs. Dick.

"I never quite believed that," said Roby. "It was something about some lover she had before she was married. She went off to Switzerland. But the Duke,—he was Mr. Palliser then,—followed her very soon and it all came right."

"When ladies are going to be duchesses, things do come right; don't they?" said Mrs. Happerton.

On the other side of Mrs. Happerton was Mr. Wharton, quite unable to talk to his right-hand neighbour, the Secretary's wife. The elder Mrs. Roby had not, indeed, much to say for herself, and he during the whole dinner was in misery. He had resolved that

there should be no intimacy of any kind between his daughter and Ferdinand Lopez,—nothing more than the merest acquaintance; and there they were, talking together before his very eyes, with more evident signs of understanding each other than were exhibited by any other two persons at the table. And yet he had no just ground of complaint against either of them. If people dine together at the same house, it may of course happen that they shall sit next to each other. And if people sit next to each other at dinner it is expected that they shall talk. Nobody could accuse Emily of flirting; but then she was a girl who under no circumstances would condescend to flirt. But she had declared boldly to her father that she loved this man, and there she was in close conversation with him! Would it not be better for him to give up any further trouble, and let her marry the man? She would certainly do so sooner or later.

When the ladies went upstairs that misery was over for a time, but Mr. Wharton was still not happy. Dick came round and took his wife's chair, so that he sat between the lord and his brother. Lopez and Happerton fell into City conversation, and Sir Damask tried to amuse himself with Mr. Wharton. But the task was hopeless,—as it always is when the elements of a party have been ill-mixed. Mr. Wharton had not even heard of the new Aldershot coach which Sir Damask had just started with Colonel Buskin and Sir Alfonso Blackbird. And when Sir Damask declared that he drove the coach up and down twice a week himself, Mr. Wharton at any rate affected to believe that such a thing was impossible. Then when Sir Damask gave him his opinion as to the cause of the

failure of a certain horse at Northampton, Mr. Wharton gave him no encouragement whatever. "I never was at a race-course in my life," said the barrister. After that Sir Damask drank his wine in silence.

"You remember that claret, my lord?" said Dick, thinking that some little compensation was due to him for what had been said about the champagne.

But Lord Mongrober's dinner had not yet had the effect of mollifying the man sufficiently for Dick's purposes. "Oh yes, I remember the wine. You call it '57, don't you?"

"And it is '57;—'57, Leoville."

"Very likely,—very likely. If it had n't been heated before the fire——"

"It has n't been near the fire," said Dick.

"Or put into a hot decanter——"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Or treated after some other damnable fashion, it would be very good wine, I dare say."

"You are hard to please, my lord, to-day," said Dick, who was put beyond his bearing.

"What is a man to say? If you will talk about your wine I can only tell you what I think. Any man may get good wine,—that is if he can afford to pay the price,—but it is n't one out of ten who knows how to put it on the table." Dick felt this to be very hard. When a man pays 110*s.* a dozen for his champagne, and then gives it to guests like Lord Mongrober who are not even expected to return the favour, then that man ought to be allowed to talk about his wine without fear of rebuke. One does n't have an agreement to that effect written down on parchment and sealed; but it is as well understood and ought to be as faith-

fully kept as any legal contract. Dick, who could on occasions be awakened to a touch of manliness, gave the bottle a shove and threw himself back in his chair. "If you ask me, I can only tell you," repeated Lord Mongrober.

"I don't believe you ever had a bottle of wine put before you in better order in all your life," said Dick. His lordship's face became very square and very red as he looked round at his host. "And as for talking about my wine, of course I talk to a man about what he understands. I talk to Monogram about pigeons, to Tom there about politics, to 'Apperton and Lopez about the price of consols, and to you about wine. If I asked you what you thought of the last new book, your lordship would be a little surprised." Lord Mongrober grunted and looked redder and squarer than ever; but he made no attempt at reply, and the victory was evidently left with Dick,—very much to the general exaltation of his character. And he was proud of himself. "We had a little tiff, me and Mongrober," he said to his wife that night. "'E 's a very good fellow, and of course he 's a lord and all that. But he has to be put down occasionally, and, by George, I did it to-night. You ask Lopez."

There were two drawing-rooms upstairs, opening into each other, but still distinct. Emily had escaped into the back room, avoiding the gushing sentiments and equivocal morals of Lady Eustace and Mrs. Leslie,—and here she was followed by Ferdinand Lopez. Mr. Wharton was in the front room, and though on entering it he did look round furtively for his daughter, he was ashamed to wander about in order that he might watch her. And there were others in

the back room,—Dick and Monogram standing on the rug, and the elder Mrs. Roby seated in a corner;—so that there was nothing peculiar in the position of the two lovers.

"Must I understand," said he, "that I am banished from Manchester Square?"

"Has papa banished you?"

"That 's what I want you to tell me."

"I know you had an interview with him, Mr. Lopez."

"Yes. I had."

"And you must know best what he told you."

"He would explain himself better to you than he did to me."

"I doubt that very much. Papa when he has anything to say generally says it plainly. However, I do think that he did intend to banish you. I do not know why I should not tell you the truth."

"I do not know either."

"I think he did—intend to banish you."

"And you?"

"I shall be guided by him in all things,—as far as I can."

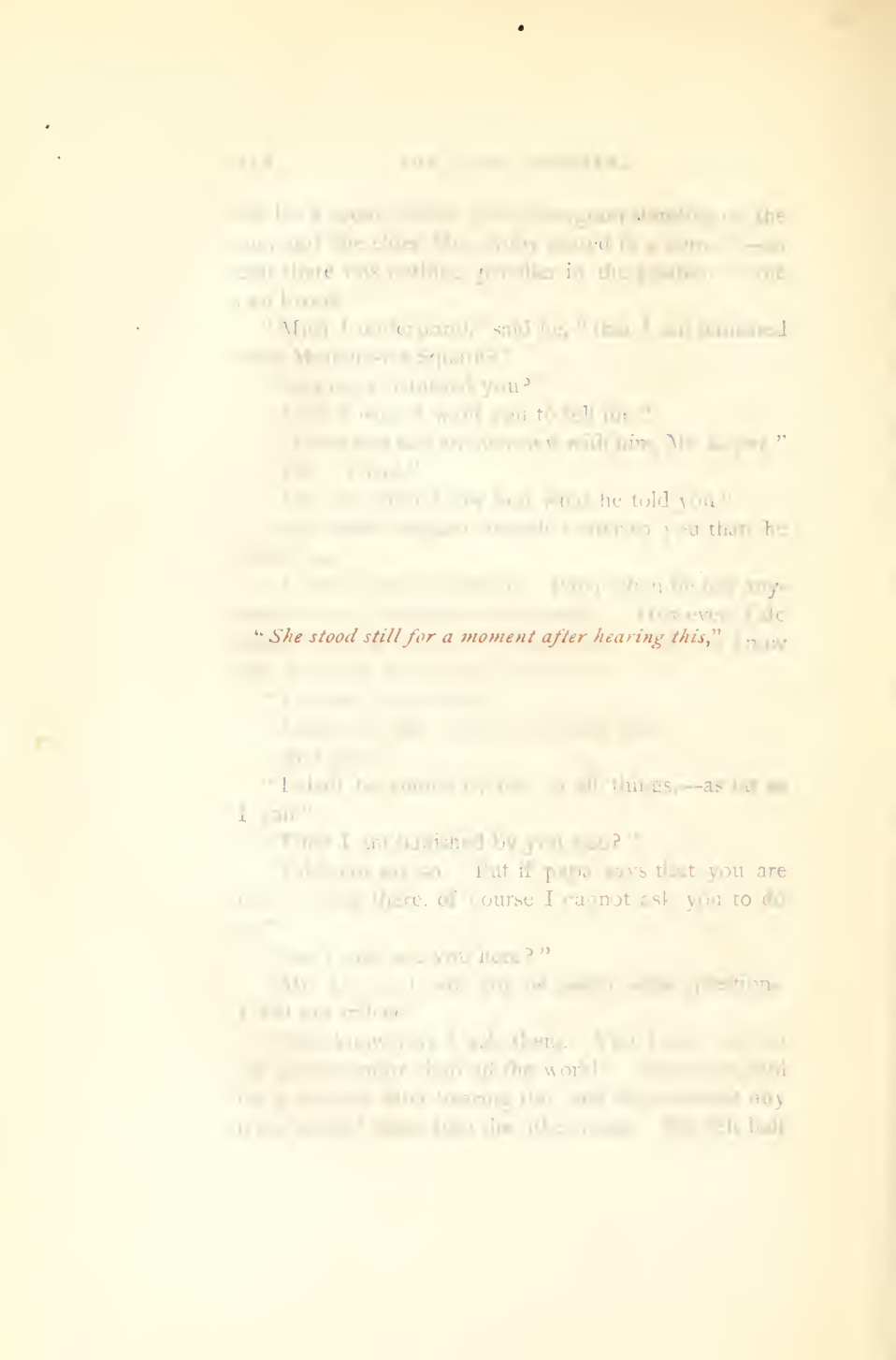
"Then I am banished by you also?"

"I did not say so. But if papa says that you are not to come there, of course I cannot ask you to do so."

"But I may see you here?"

"Mr. Lopez, I will not be asked some questions. I will not indeed."

"You know why I ask them. You know that to me you are more than all the world." She stood still for a moment after hearing this, and then without any reply walked away into the other room. She felt half



"She stood still for a moment after hearing this,"

ashamed of herself in that she had not rebuked him for speaking to her in that fashion after his interview with her father, and yet his words had filled her heart with delight. He had never before plainly declared his love for her,—though she had been driven by her father's questions to declare her own love to herself. She was quite sure of herself,—that the man was and would always be to her the one being whom she would prefer to all others. Her fate was in her father's hands. If he chose to make her wretched he must do so. But on one point she had quite made up her mind. She would make no concealment. To the world at large she had nothing to say on the matter. But with her father there should be no attempt on her part to keep back the truth. Were he to question her on the subject she would tell him, as far as her memory would serve her, the very words which Lopez had spoken to her this evening. She would ask nothing from him. He had already told her that the man was to be rejected, and had refused to give any other reason than his dislike to the absence of any English connection. She would not again ask even for a reason. But she would make her father understand that though she obeyed him she regarded the exercise of his authority as tyrannical and irrational.

They left the house before any of the other guests and walked round the corner together into the Square. "What a very vulgar set of people!" said Mr. Wharton as soon as they were down the steps.

"Some of them were," said Emily, making a mental reservation of her own.

"Upon my word I don't know where to make the exception. Why on earth any one should want to

know such a person as Lord Mongrober I can't understand. What does he bring into society?"

"A title."

"But what does that do of itself? He is an insolent, bloated brute."

"Papa, you are using strong language to-night."

"And that Lady Eustace! Heaven and earth! Am I to be told that that creature is a lady?"

They had now come to their own door, and while that was being opened and as they went up into their own drawing-room nothing was said, but then Emily began again. "I wonder why you go to Aunt Harriet's at all. You don't like the people?"

"I did n't like any of them to-day."

"Why do you go there? You don't like Aunt Harriet herself. You don't like Uncle Dick. You don't like Mr. Lopez."

"Certainly I do not."

"I don't know who it is you do like."

"I like Mr. Fletcher."

"It 's no use saying that to me, papa."

"You ask me a question, and I choose to answer it. I like Arthur Fletcher, because he is a gentleman,—because he is a gentleman of the class to which I belong myself; because he works; because I know all about him so that I can be sure of him; because he had a decent father and mother; because I am safe with him, being quite sure that he will say to me neither awkward things nor impertinent things. He will not talk to me about driving a mail-coach like that foolish baronet, nor tell me the price of all his wines like your uncle." Nor would Ferdinand Lopez do so, thought Emily to herself. "But in all such

matters, my dear, the great thing is like to like. I have spoken of a young person, merely because I wish you to understand that I can sympathise with others besides those of my own age. But to-night there was no one there at all like myself,—or, as I hope, like you. That man Roby is a chattering ass. How such a man can be useful to any government I can't conceive. Happerton was the best, but what had he to say for himself? I 've always thought that there was very little wit wanted to make a fortune in the City." In this frame of mind Mr. Wharton went off to bed, but not a word more was spoken about Ferdinand Lopez.

CHAPTER XI.

CARLTON TERRACE.

Certainly the thing was done very well by Lady Glen,—as many in the political world persisted in calling her even in these days. She had not as yet quiet carried out her plan,—the doing of which would have required her to reconcile her husband to some excessive abnormal expenditure, and to have obtained from him a deliberate sanction for appropriation and probable sale of property. She never could find the proper moment for doing this, having, with all her courage,—low down in some corner of her heart,—a wholesome fear of a certain quiet power which her husband possessed. She could not bring herself to make her proposition;—but she almost acted as though it had been made and approved. Her house was always gorgeous with flowers. Of course there would be the bill;—and he, when he saw the exotics, and the whole place turned into a bower of ever fresh blooming floral glories, must know that there would be the bill. And when he found that there was an archducal dinner-party every week, and an almost imperial reception twice a week; that at these receptions a banquet was always provided; when he was asked whether she might buy a magnificent pair of bay carriage-horses, as to which she assured him that nothing so lovely had ever as yet been seen stepping in the streets of Lon-

don,—of course he must know that the bills would come. It was better, perhaps, to do it in this way, than to make any direct proposition. And then, early in June, she spoke to him as to the guests to be invited to Gatherum Castle in August. "Do you want to go to Gatherum in August?" he asked in surprise. For she hated the place, and had hardly been content to spend ten days there every year at Christmas.

"I think it should be done," she said solemnly. "One cannot quite consider just now what one likes one's self."

"Why not?"

"You would hardly go to a small place like Matching in your present position. There are so many people whom you should entertain! You would probably have two or three of the foreign ministers down for a time."

"We always used to find plenty of room at Matching."

"But you did not always use to be Prime Minister. It is only for such a time as this that such a house as Gatherum is serviceable."

He was silent for a moment, thinking about it, and then gave way without another word. She was probably right. There was the huge pile of magnificent buildings; and somebody, at any rate, had thought that it behoved a Duke of Omnium to live in such a palace. If it ought to be done at any time, it ought to be done now. In that his wife had been right. "Very well. Then let us go there."

"I 'll manage it all," said the Duchess,—"I and Locock." Locock was the house-steward.

"I remember once," said the Duke, and he smiled

as he spoke with a peculiarly sweet expression, which would at times come across his generally inexpressive face,—"I remember once that some First Minister of the Crown gave evidence as to the amount of his salary, saying that his place entailed upon him expenses higher than his stipend would defray. I begin to think that my experience will be the same."

"Does that fret you?"

"No, Cora;—it certainly does not fret me, or I should not allow it. But I think there should be a limit. No man is ever rich enough to squander."

Though they were to squander her fortune,—the money which she had brought,—for the next ten years at a much greater rate than she contemplated, they might do so without touching the Palliser property. Of that she was quite sure. And the squandering was to be all for his glory,—so that he might retain his position as a popular Prime Minister. For an instant it occurred to her that she would tell him all this. But she checked herself, and the idea of what she had been about to say brought the blood into her face. Never yet had she in talking to him alluded to her own wealth. "Of course we are spending money," she said. "If you give me a hint to hold my hand, I will hold it."

He had looked at her, and read it all in her face. "God knows," he said, "you 've a right to do it if it pleases you."

"For your sake!" Then he stooped down and kissed her twice, and left her to arrange her parties as she pleased. After that she congratulated herself that she had not made the direct proposition, knowing that she might now do pretty much what she pleased.

Then there were solemn cabinets held, at which she presided, and Mrs. Finn and Locock assisted. At other cabinets it is supposed that, let a leader be ever so autocratic by disposition and superior by intelligence, still he must not unfrequently yield to the opinion of his colleagues. But in this cabinet the Duchess always had her own way, though she was very persistent in asking for counsel. Locock was frightened about the money. Hitherto money had come without a word, out of the common, spoken to the Duke. The Duke had always signed certain cheques, but they had been normal cheques; and the money in its natural course had flown in to meet them;—but now he must be asked to sign abnormal cheques. That, indeed, had already been done, but still the money had been there. A large balance, such as had always stood to his credit, would stand a bigger racket than had yet been made. But Locock was quite sure that the balance ought not to be much further reduced,—and that steps must be taken. Something must be sold! The idea of selling anything was dreadful to the mind of Locock! Or else money must be borrowed! Now the management of the Palliser property had always been conducted on principles antagonistic to borrowing. "But his Grace has never spent his income," said the Duchess. That was true. But the money, as it showed a tendency to heap itself up, had been used for the purchase of other bits of property, or for the amelioration of the estates generally. "You don't mean to say that we can't get money if we want it!" Locock was profuse in his assurances that any amount of money could be obtained,—only that something must be done. "Then let something be done," said the Duchess,

going on with her general plans. "Many people are rich," said the Duchess afterwards to her friend, "and some people are very rich indeed; but nobody seems to be rich enough to have ready money to do just what he wishes. It all goes into a grand sum total, which is never to be touched without a feeling of sacrifice. I suppose you have always enough for everything." It was well known that the present Mrs. Finn, as Madame Goesler, had been a wealthy woman.

"Indeed, no;—very far from that. I have n't a shilling."

"What has happened?" asked the Duchess, pretending to be frightened.

"You forget that I 've got a husband of my own, and that he has to be consulted."

"That must be nonsense. But don't you think women are fools to marry when they 've got anything of their own, and could be their own mistresses? I could n't have been. I was made to marry before I was old enough to assert myself."

"And how well they did for you!"

"Pas si mal.—He 's Prime Minister, which is a great thing, and I begin to find myself filled to the full with political ambition. I feel myself to be a Lady Macbeth, prepared for the murder of any Duncan or any Daubeny who may stand in my lord's way. In the meantime, like Lady Macbeth herself, we must attend to the banqueting. Her lord appeared and misbehaved himself; my lord won't show himself at all,—which I think is worse."

Our old friend Phineas Finn, who had now reached a higher place in politics than even his political dreams had assigned to him, though he was a Member of Par-

liament, was much away from London in these days. New brooms sweep clean; and official new brooms, I think, sweep cleaner than any other. Who has not watched at the commencement of a ministry some Secretary, some Lord, or some Commissioner, who intends by fresh Herculean labours to cleanse the Augean stables just committed to his care? Who does not know the gentleman at the Home Office, who means to reform the police and put an end to malefactors; or the new Minister at the Board of Works, who is to make London beautiful as by a magician's stroke,—or, above all, the new First Lord, who is resolved that he will really build us a fleet, purge the dockyards, and save us half a million a year at the same time? Phineas Finn was bent on unriddling the Irish sphinx. Surely something might be done to prove to his susceptible countrymen that at the present moment no curse could be laid upon them so heavy as that of having to rule themselves apart from England; and he thought that this might be the easier, as he became from day to day more thoroughly convinced that those Home Rulers who were all around him in the House were altogether of the same opinion. Had some inscrutable decree of fate ordained and made it certain,—with a certainty not to be disturbed,—that no candidate could be returned to Parliament who would not assert the earth to be triangular, there would rise immediately a clamorous assertion of triangularity among political aspirants. The test would be innocent. Candidates have swallowed, and daily do swallow, many a worse one. As might be this doctrine of a great triangle, so is the doctrine of Home Rule. Why is a gentleman of property to be kept out in the cold by some O'Mullins

because he will not mutter an unmeaning shibboleth? "Triangular? Yes,—or lozenge-shaped if you please; but, gentlemen, I am the man for Tipperary." Phineas Finn having seen, or thought that he had seen, all this, began, from the very first moment of his appointment, to consider painfully within himself whether the genuine services of an honest and patriotic man might not compass some remedy for the present ill-boding ferment of the country. What was it that the Irish really did want; —what that they wanted, and had not got, and which might with propriety be conceded to them? What was it that the English really would refuse to sanction, even though it might not be wanted? He found himself beating about among rocks as to Catholic education and Papal interference, the passage among which might be made clearer to him in Irish atmosphere than in that of Westminster. Therefore he was away a good deal in these days, travelling backwards and forwards as he might be wanted for any debate. But as his wife did not accompany him on these fitful journeys, she was able to give her time very much to the Duchess.

The Duchess was on the whole very successful with her parties. There were people who complained that she had everybody; that there was no selection whatever as to politics, principles, rank, morals,—or even manners. But in such a work as the Duchess had now taken in hand, it was impossible that she should escape censure. They who really knew what was being done were aware that nobody was asked to that house without an idea that his or her presence might be desirable,—in however remote a degree. Paragraphs in newspapers go for much, and therefore the writers

and editors of such paragraphs were there,—sometimes with their wives. Mr. Broune, of the Breakfast Table, was to be seen there constantly, with his wife Lady Carbury, and poor old Booker of the Literary Chronicle. City men can make a budget popular or the reverse, and therefore the Mills Happertons of the day were welcome. Rising barristers might be wanted to become Solicitors-General. The pet Orpheus of the hour, the young tragic actor who was thought to have a real Hamlet within him, the old painter who was growing rich on his reputation, and the young painter who was still strong with hope, even the little trilling poet though he trilled never so faintly, and the somewhat wooden novelist, all had tongues of their own, and certain modes of expression, which might assist or injure the Palliser Coalition,—as the Duke's ministry was now called.

"Who is that man? I 've seen him here before. The Duchess was talking to him ever so long just now." The question was asked by Mr. Rattler of Mr. Roby. About half an hour before this time Mr. Rattler had essayed to get a few words with the Duchess, beginning with the communication of some small political secret. But the Duchess did not care much for the Rattlers attached to her husband's Government. They were men whose services could be had for a certain payment,—and when paid for were, the Duchess thought, at the Premier's command without further trouble. Of course they came to the receptions, and were entitled to a smile apiece as they entered. But they were entitled to nothing more, and on this occasion Rattler had felt himself to be snubbed. It did not occur to him to abuse the Duchess. The Duchess was

too necessary for abuse,—just at present. But any friend of the Duchess,—any favourite for the moment,—was, of course, open to remark.

"He is a man named Lopez," said Roby, "a friend of Happerton;—a very clever fellow they say."

"Did you ever see him anywhere else?"

"Well, yes;—I have met him at dinner."

"He was never in the House. What does he do?" Rattler was distressed to think that any drone should have made its way into the hive of working bees.

"Oh;—money, I fancy."

"He 's not a partner in Hunky's, is he?"

"I fancy not. I think I should have known if he was."

"She ought to remember that people make a use of coming here," said Rattler. She was, of course, the Duchess. "It 's not like a private house. And whatever influence outsiders get by coming, so much she loses. Somebody ought to explain that to her."

"I don't think you or I could do that," replied Mr. Roby.

"I 'll tell the Duke in a minute," said Rattler. Perhaps he thought he could tell the Duke, but we may be allowed to doubt whether his prowess would not have fallen below the necessary pitch when he met the Duke's eye.

Lopez was there for the third time, about the middle of June, and had certainly contrived to make himself personally known to the Duchess. There had been a deputation from the City to the Prime Minister asking for a subsidised mail, via San Francisco, to Japan, and Lopez, though he had no interest in Japan, had contrived to be one of the number. He had contrived

also, as the deputation was departing, to say a word on his own account to the Minister, and had ingratiated himself. The Duke had remembered him, and had suggested that he should have a card. And now he was among the flowers and greatness, the beauty, the politics, and the fashion of the Duchess's gatherings for the third time. "It is very well done,—very well, indeed," said Mr. Boffin to him. Lopez had been dining with Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, and had now again encountered his late host and hostess. Mr. Boffin was a gentleman who had belonged to the late ministry, but had somewhat out-Heroded Herod in his conservatism, so as to have been considered to be unfit for the Coalition. Of course he was proud of his own staunchness, and a little inclined to criticise the lax principles of men who, for the sake of carrying on her Majesty's Government, could be conservatives one day and liberals the next. He was a laborious, honest man, —but hardly of calibre sufficient not to regret his own honesty in such an emergency as the present. It is easy for most of us to keep our hands from picking and stealing when picking and stealing plainly lead to prison diet and prison garments. But when silks and satins come of it, and with the silks and satins general respect, the net result of honesty does not seem to be so secure. Whence will come the reward, and when? On whom the punishment, and where? A man will not, surely, be damned for belonging to a Coalition Ministry! Boffin was a little puzzled as he thought on all this, but in the meantime was very proud of his own consistency.

"I think it is so lovely!" said Mrs. Boffin. "You look down through an Elysium of rhododendrons into

a Paradise of mirrors. I don't think there was ever anything like it in London before."

"I don't know that we ever had anybody at the same time rich enough to do this kind of thing as it is done now," said Boffin, "and powerful enough to get such people together. If the country can be ruled by flowers and looking-glasses, of course it is very well."

"Flowers and looking-glasses won't prevent the country being ruled well," said Lopez.

"I 'm not so sure of that," continued Boffin. "We all know what bread and the games came to in Rome."

"What did they come to?" asked Mrs. Boffin.

"To a man burning Rome, my dear, for his amusement, dressed in a satin petticoat and a wreath of roses."

"I don't think the Duke will dress himself like that," said Mrs. Boffin.

"And I don't think," said Lopez, "that the graceful expenditure of wealth in a rich man's house has any tendency to demoralize the people."

"The attempt here," said Boffin severely, "is to demoralize the rulers of the people. I am glad to have come once to see how the thing is done; but as an independent member of the House of Commons I should not wish to be known to frequent the saloon of the Duchess." Then Mr. Boffin took away Mrs. Boffin, much to that lady's regret.

"This is fairy land," said Lopez to the Duchess, as he left the room.

"Come and be a fairy then," she answered, very graciously. "We are always on the wing about this hour on Wednesday night." The words contained a

general invitation for the season, and were esteemed by Lopez as an indication of great favour. It must be acknowledged of the Duchess that she was prone to make favourites, perhaps without adequate cause; though it must be conceded to her that she rarely altogether threw off from her any one whom she had once taken to her good graces. It must also be confessed that when she had allowed herself to hate either a man or a woman, she generally hated on to the end. No Paradise could be too charming for her friends; no Pandemonium too frightful for her enemies. In reference to Mr. Lopez she would have said, if interrogated, that she had taken the man up in obedience to her husband. But in truth she had liked the look and the voice of the man. Her husband before now had recommended men to her notice and kindness, whom at the first trial she had rejected from her good-will, and whom she had continued to reject ever afterwards, let her husband's urgency be what it might.

Another old friend, of whom former chronicles were not silent, was at the Duchess's that night, and there came across Mrs. Finn. This was Barrington Erle, a politician of long standing, who was still looked upon by many as a young man, because he had always been known as a young man, and because he had never done anything to compromise his position in that respect. He had not married, or settled himself down in a house of his own, or become subject to gout, or given up being careful about the fitting of his clothes. No doubt the grey hairs were getting the better of the black hairs, both on his head and face, and marks of coming crows' feet were to be seen if you looked close at him, and he had become careful about his great-coat and

umbrella. He was in truth much nearer fifty than forty;—nevertheless he was felt in the House and among Cabinet Ministers, and among the wives of members and Cabinet Ministers, to be a young man still. And when he was invited to become Secretary for Ireland it was generally felt that he was too young for the place. He declined it, however; and when he went to the Post-office, the gentlemen there all felt that they had had a boy put over them. Phineas Finn, who had become Secretary for Ireland, was in truth ten years his junior. But Phineas Finn had been twice married, and had gone through other phases of life, such as make a man old. "How does Phineas like it?" Erle asked. Phineas Finn and Barrington Erle had gone through some political struggles together, and had been very intimate.

"I hope not very much," said the lady.

"Why so? Because he 's away so much?"

"No;—not that. I should not grudge his absence if the work satisfied him. But I know him so well. The more he takes to it now,—the more sanguine he is as to some special thing to be done,—the more bitter will be the disappointment when he is disappointed. For there never really is anything special to be done;—is there, Mr. Erle?"

"I think there is always a little too much zeal about Finn."

"Of course there is. And then with zeal there always goes a thin skin,—and unjustifiable expectations, and biting despair, and contempt of others, and all the elements of unhappiness."

"That is a sad programme for your husband."

"He has recuperative faculties which bring him

round at last;—but I really doubt whether he was made for a politician in this country. You remember Lord Brock?"

"Dear old Brock;—of course I do. How should I not, if you remember him?"

"Young men are boys at college, rowing in boats, when women have been ever so long out in the world. He was the very model of an English statesman. He loved his country dearly, and wished her to be, as he believed her to be, first among nations. But he had no belief in perpetuating her greatness by any grand improvements. Let things take their way naturally,—with a slight direction hither or thither as things might require. That was his method of ruling. He believed in men rather than measures. As long as he had loyalty around him, he could be personally happy, and quite confident as to the country. He never broke his heart because he could not carry this or that reform. What would have hurt him would have been to be worsted in personal conflict. But he could always hold his own, and he was always happy. Your man with a thin skin, a vehement ambition, a scrupulous conscience, and a sanguine desire for rapid improvement, is never a happy, and seldom a fortunate politician."

"Mrs. Finn, you understand it all better than any one else that I ever knew."

"I have been watching it a long time, and of course very closely since I have been married."

"But you have an eye trained to see it all. What a useful member you would have been in a government!"

"But I should never have had patience to sit all night upon that bench in the House of Commons.

How men can do it! They must n't read. They can't think because of the speaking. It does n't do for them to talk. I don't believe they ever listen. It is n't in human nature to listen hour after hour to such platitudes. I believe they fall into a habit of half wakeful sleeping which carries them through the hours; but even that can't be pleasant. I look upon the Treasury Bench in July as a sort of casual-ward which we know to be necessary, but is almost too horrid to be contemplated."

"Men do get bread and skilly there certainly; but, Mrs. Finn, we can go into the library and smoking-room."

"Oh yes;—and a clerk in an office can read the newspapers instead of doing his duty. But there is a certain surveillance exercised, and a certain quantity of work exacted. I have met Lords of the Treasury out at dinner on Mondays and Thursdays, but we all regard them as boys who have shirked out of school. I think upon the whole, Mr. Erle, we women have the best of it."

"I don't suppose you will go in for your 'rights.'"

"Not by Act of Parliament, or by platform meeting. I have a great idea of a woman's rights; but that is the way, I think, to throw them away. What do you think of the Duchess's evenings?"

"Lady Glen is in her way as great a woman as you are;—perhaps greater, because nothing ever stops her."

"Whereas I have scruples."

"Her Grace has none. She has feelings and convictions which keep her straight, but no scruples. Look at her now talking to Sir Orlando Drought, a

man whom she both hates and despises. I am sure she is looking forward to some happy time in which the Duke may pitch Sir Orlando overboard, and rule supreme, with me or some other subordinate leading the House of Commons simply as lieutenant. Such a time will never come, but that is her idea. But she is talking to Sir Orlando now as if she were pouring her full confidence into his ear, and Sir Orlando is believing her. Sir Orlando is in a seventh heaven, and she is measuring his credulity inch by inch."

"She makes the place very bright."

"And is spending an enormous deal of money," said Barrington Erle.

"What does it matter?"

"Well, no;—if the Duke likes it. I had an idea that the Duke would not like the display of the thing. There he is. Do you see him in the corner with his brother duke? He does n't look as if he were happy; does he? No one would think he was the master of everything here. He has got himself hidden almost behind the screen. I 'm sure he does n't like it."

"He tries to like whatever she likes," said Mrs. Finn.

As her husband was away in Ireland, Mrs. Finn was staying in the house in Carlton Gardens. The Duchess at present required so much of her time that this was found to be convenient. When, therefore, the guests on the present occasion had all gone the Duchess and Mrs. Finn were left together. "Did you ever see anything so hopeless as he is?" said the Duchess.

"Who is hopeless?"

"Heavens and earth! Plantagenet;—who else? Is there another man in the world would come into his own house, among his own guests, and speak only to one person? And, then, think of it! Popularity is the staff on which alone Ministers can lean in this country with security."

"Political but not social popularity."

"You know as well as I do that the two go together. We 've seen enough of that even in our day. What broke up Mr. Gresham's ministry? If he had stayed away people might have thought that he was reading blue-books, or calculating coinage, or preparing a speech. That would have been much better. But he comes in and sits for half an hour whispering to another duke! I hate dukes."

"He talks to the Duke of St. Bungay because there is no one he trusts so much. A few years ago it would have been Mr. Mildmay."

"My dear," said the Duchess angrily, "you treat me as though I were a child. Of course I know why he chooses that old man out of all the crowd. I don't suppose he does it from any stupid pride of rank. I know very well what set of ideas govern him. But that is n't the point. He has to reflect what others think of it, and to endeavour to do what will please them. There was I telling tarradiddles by the yard to that old oaf, Sir Orlando Drought, when a confidential word from Plantagenet would have had ten times more effect. And why can't he speak a word to the people's wives? They would n't bite him. He has got to say a few words to you sometimes,—to whom it does n't signify, my dear——"

"I don't know about that."

"But he never speaks to another woman. He was here this evening for exactly forty minutes, and he did n't open his lips to a female creature. I watched him. How on earth am I to pull him through if he goes on in that way? Yes, Locock, I 'll go to bed, and I don't think I 'll get up for a week."

CHAPTER XII.

THE GATHERING OF CLOUDS.

THROUGHOUT June and the first week of July the affairs of the ministry went on successfully, in spite of the social sins of the Duke and the occasional despair of the Duchess. There had been many politicians who had thought, or had, at any rate, predicted, that the Coalition Ministry would not live a month. There had been men, such as Lord Fawn on one side and Mr. Boffin on the other, who had found themselves stranded disagreeably,—with no certain position,—unwilling to sit immediately behind a Treasury bench from which they were excluded, and too shy to place themselves immediately opposite. Seats beneath the gangway were, of course, open to such of them as were members of the Lower House, and those seats had to be used; but they were not accustomed to sit beneath the gangway. These gentlemen had expected that the seeds of weakness, of which they had perceived the scattering, would grow at once into an enormous crop of blunders, difficulties, and complications; but, for a while, the ministry were saved from these dangers either by the energy of the Prime Minister, or the popularity of his wife, or perhaps by the sagacity of the elder Duke;—so that there grew up an idea that the Coalition was really the proper thing. In one respect it certainly was successful. The Home

Rulers, or Irish party generally, were left without an inch of standing ground. Their support was not needed, and therefore they were not courted. For the moment there was not even a necessity to pretend that Home Rule was anything but an absurdity from beginning to end;—so much so that one or two leading Home Rulers, men who had taken up the cause not only that they might become Members of Parliament, but with some further ideas of speech-making and popularity, declared that the Coalition had been formed merely with a view of putting down Ireland. This capability of dispensing with a generally untractable element of support was felt to be a great comfort. Then, too, there was a set in the House,—at that moment not a very numerous set,—who had been troublesome friends to the old liberal party, and which the Coalition was able, if not to ignore, at any rate to disregard. These were the staunch economists, and argumentative philosophical radicals,—men of standing and repute, who are always in doubtful times individually flattered by Ministers, who have great privileges accorded to them of speaking and dividing, and who are not unfrequently even thanked for their rods by the very owners of the backs which bear the scourges. These men could not be quite set aside by the Coalition as were the Home Rulers. It was not even yet, perhaps, wise to count them out, or to leave them to talk to benches absolutely empty;—but the tone of flattery with which they had been addressed became gradually less warm; and when the scourges were wielded, ministerial backs took themselves out of the way. There grew up unconsciously a feeling of security against attack which was distasteful to these

gentlemen, and was in itself perhaps a little dangerous. Gentlemen bound to support the Government, when they perceived that there was comparatively but little to do, and that that little might be easily done, became careless, and, perhaps, a little contemptuous. So that the great popular orator, Mr. Turnbull, found himself compelled to rise in his seat, and ask whether the noble Duke at the head of the Government thought himself strong enough to rule without attention to parliamentary details. The question was asked with an air of inexorable severity, and was intended to have deep signification. Mr. Turnbull had disliked the Coalition from the beginning; but then Mr. Turnbull always disliked everything. He had so accustomed himself to wield the constitutional cat-of-nine-tails, that heaven will hardly be happy to him unless he be allowed to flog the cherubim. Though the party with which he was presumed to act had generally been in power since he had been in the House, he had never allowed himself to agree with a Minister on any point. And as he had never been satisfied with a liberal Government, it was not probable that he should endure a Coalition in silence. At the end of a rather lengthy speech, he repeated his question, and then sat down, taking his place with all that constitutional indignation which becomes the parliamentary flagellator of the day. The little jokes with which Sir Orlando answered him were very well in their way. Mr. Turnbull did not care much whether he were answered or not. Perhaps the jauntiness of Sir Orlando, which implied that the Coalition was too strong to regard attack, somewhat irritated outsiders. But there certainly grew up from that moment a feel-

ing among such men as Erle and Rattler that care was necessary, that the House, taken as a whole, was not in a condition to be manipulated with easy freedom, and that Sir Orlando must be made to understand that he was not strong enough to depend upon jauntiness. The jaunty statesman must be very sure of his personal following. There was a general opinion that Sir Orlando had not brought the Coalition well out of the first real attack which had been made upon it.

"Well, Phineas; how do you like the Phœnix?" Phineas Finn had flown back to London at the instigation probably of Mr. Rattler, and was now standing at the window of Brooks's club with Barrington Erle. It was near nine one Thursday evening, and they were both about to return to the House.

"I don't like the Castle, if you mean that."

"Tyrone is n't troublesome surely?" The Marquis of Tyrone was the Lord Lieutenant of the day, and had in his time been a very strong conservative.

"He finds me troublesome, I fear."

"I don't wonder at that, Phineas."

"How should it be otherwise? What can he and I have in sympathy with one another? He has been brought up with all an Orangeman's hatred for a Papist. Now that he is in high office, he can abandon the display of the feeling,—perhaps the feeling itself as regards the country at large. He knows that it does n't become a Lord Lieutenant to be Orange. But how can he put himself into a boat with me?"

"All that kind of thing vanishes when a man is in office."

"Yes, as a rule; because men go together into

office with the same general predilections. Is it too hot to walk down ?"

"I 'll walk a little way,—till you make me hot by arguing."

"I have n't an argument left in me," said Phineas. "Of course everything over there seems easy enough now,—so easy that Lord Tyrone evidently imagines that the good times are coming back in which governors may govern and not be governed."

"You are pretty quiet in Ireland now, I suppose; —no martial law, suspension of the habeas corpus, or anything of that kind, just at present ?"

"No; thank goodness!" said Phineas.

"I 'm not quite sure whether a general suspension of the habeas corpus would not upon the whole be the most comfortable state of things for Irishmen themselves. But whether good or bad, you 've nothing of that kind of thing now. You 've no great measure that you wish to pass ?"

"But they 've a great measure that they wish to pass."

"They know better than that. They don't want to kill their golden goose."

"The people, who are infinitely ignorant of all political work, do want it. There are counties in which, if you were to poll the people, Home Rule would carry nearly every voter,—except the members themselves."

"You would n't give it them ?"

"Certainly not;—any more than I would allow a son to ruin himself because he asked me. But I would endeavour to teach them that they can get nothing by Home Rule,—that their taxes would be

heavier, their property less secure, their lives less safe, their general position more debased, and their chances of national success more remote than ever."

"You can never teach them, except by the slow lesson of habit. The Heptarchy did n't mould itself into a nation in a day."

"Men were governed then, and could be and were moulded. I feel sure that even in Ireland there is a stratum of men, above the working peasants, who would understand, and make those below them understand, the position of the country, if they could only be got to give up fighting about religion. Even now Home Rule is regarded by the multitude as a weapon to be used against Protestantism on behalf of the Pope."

"I suppose the Pope is the great sinner ?"

"They got over the Pope in France,—even in early days, before religion had become a farce in the country. They have done so in Italy."

"Yes;—they 've got over the Pope in Italy certainly."

"And yet," said Phineas, "the bulk of the people are staunch Catholics. Of course the same attempt to maintain a temporal influence, with the hope of recovering temporal power, is made in other countries. But while we see the attempt failing elsewhere,—so that we know that the power of the church is going to the wall,—yet in Ireland it is infinitely stronger now than it was fifty, or even twenty years ago."

"Because we have been removing restraints on Papal aggression, while other nations have been imposing restraints. There are those at Rome who believe all England to be Romish at heart, because here in

England a Roman Catholic can say what he will, and print what he will."

"And yet," said Phineas, "all England does not return one Catholic to the House, while we have Jews in plenty. You have a Jew among your English judges, but at present not a single Roman Catholic. What do you suppose are the comparative numbers of the population here in England?"

"And you are going to cure all this;—while Tyrone thinks it ought to be left as it is? I rather agree with Tyrone."

"No," said Phineas wearily; "I doubt whether I shall ever cure anything, or even make any real attempt. My patriotism just goes far enough to make me unhappy, and Lord Tyrone thinks that while Dublin ladies dance at the Castle, and the list of agrarian murders is kept low, the country is admirably managed. I don't quite agree with him;—that 's all."

Then there arose a legal difficulty, which caused much trouble to the Coalition Ministry. There fell vacant a certain seat on the bench of judges,—a seat of considerable dignity and importance, but not quite of the highest rank. Sir Gregory Grogram, who was a rich, energetic man, determined to have a peerage, and convinced that, should the Coalition fall to pieces, the liberal element would be in the ascendant,—so that the woolsack would then be opened to him,—declined to occupy the place. Sir Timothy Beeswax, the Solicitor-General, saw that it was exactly suited for him, and had no hesitation in expressing his opinion to that effect. But the place was not given to Sir Timothy. It was explained to Sir Timothy that the

old rule,—or rather custom,—of offering certain high positions to the law officers of the Crown had been abrogated. Some Prime Minister, or, more probably, some collection of Cabinet Ministers, had asserted the custom to be a bad one,—and, as far as right went, Sir Timothy was declared not to have a leg to stand upon. He was informed that his services in the House were too valuable to be so lost. Some people said that his temper was against him. Others were of opinion that he had risen from the ranks too quickly, and that Lord Ramsden, who had come from the same party, thought that Sir Timothy had not yet won his spurs. The Solicitor-General resigned in a huff, and then withdrew his resignation. Sir Gregory thought the withdrawal should not be accepted, having found Sir Timothy to be an unsympathetic colleague. Our Duke consulted the old Duke, among whose theories of official life forbearance to all colleagues and subordinates was conspicuous. The withdrawal was, therefore, allowed,—but the Coalition could not after that be said to be strong in regard to its Law Officers.

But the first concerted attack against the ministry was made in reference to the budget. Mr. Monk, who had consented to undertake the duties of Chancellor of the Exchequer under the urgent entreaties of the two dukes, was of course late with his budget. It was April before the Coalition had been formed. The budget when produced had been very popular. Budgets, like babies, are always little loves when first born. But as their infancy passes away, they also become subject to many stripes. The details are less pleasing than was the whole in the hands of the nurse.

There was a certain "interest," very influential both by general wealth and by the presence of many members in the House, which thought that Mr. Monk had disregarded its just claims. Mr. Monk had refused to relieve the Brewers from their licences. Now the Brewers had for some years been agitating about their licences,—and it is acknowledged in politics that any measure is to be carried, or to be left out in the cold uncarried and neglected, according to the number of deputations which may be got to press a Minister on the subject. Now the Brewers had had deputation after deputation to many Chancellors of the Exchequer; and these deputations had been most respectable,—we may almost say imperative. It was quite usual for a deputation to have four or five county members among its body, all Brewers; and the average wealth of a deputation of Brewers would buy up half London. All the Brewers in the House had been among the supporters of the Coalition, the number of liberal and conservative Brewers having been about equal. But now there was a fear that the "interest" might put itself into opposition. Mr. Monk had been firm. More than one of the ministry had wished to yield;—but he had discussed the matter with his Chief, and they were both very firm. The Duke had never doubted. Mr. Monk had never doubted. From day to day certain organs of the Press expressed an opinion, gradually increasing in strength, that however strong might be the Coalition as a body, it was weak as to finance. This was hard, because not very many years ago the Duke himself had been known as a particularly strong Minister of Finance. An amendment was moved in Committee as to the Brewers'

Licences, and there was almost a general opinion that the Coalition would be broken up. Mr. Monk would certainly not remain in office if the Brewers were to be relieved from their licences.

Then it was that Phineas Finn was recalled from Ireland in red-hot haste. The measure was debated for a couple of nights, and Mr. Monk carried his point. The Brewers' Licences were allowed to remain, as one great gentleman from Burton declared, a "disgrace to the fiscal sagacity of the country." The Coalition was so far victorious;—but there arose a general feeling that its strength had been impaired.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. WHARTON COMPLAINS.

"I THINK you have betrayed me." This accusation was brought by Mr. Wharton against Mrs. Roby in that lady's drawing-room, and was occasioned by a report that had been made to the old lawyer by his daughter. He was very angry and almost violent;—so much so that by his manner he gave a considerable advantage to the lady whom he was accusing.

Mrs. Roby undoubtedly had betrayed her brother-in-law. She had been false to the trust reposed in her. He had explained his wishes to her in regard to his daughter, to whom she had in some sort assumed to stand in place of a mother, and she, while pretending to act in accordance with his wishes, had directly opposed them. But it was not likely that he would be able to prove her treachery though he might be sure of it. He had desired that his girl should see as little as possible of Ferdinand Lopez, but had hesitated to give a positive order that she should not meet him. He had indeed himself taken her to a dinner-party at which he knew that she would meet him. But Mrs. Roby had betrayed him. Since the dinner-party she had arranged a meeting at her own house on behalf of the lover,—as to which arrangement Emily Wharton had herself been altogether innocent. Emily had met

the man in her aunt's house, not expecting to meet him, and the lover had had an opportunity of speaking his mind freely. She also had spoken hers freely. She would not engage herself to him without her father's consent. With that consent she would do so, —oh, so willingly! She did not coy her love. He might be certain that she would give herself to no one else. Her heart was entirely his. But she had pledged herself to her father, and on no consideration would she break that pledge. She went on to say that after what had passed she thought that they had better not meet. In such meetings there could be no satisfaction, and must be much pain. But he had her full permission to use any arguments that he could use with her father. On the evening of that day she told her father all that had passed,—omitting no detail either of what she had said or of what had been said to her, —adding a positive assurance of obedience, but doing so with a severe solemnity and apparent consciousness of ill-usage which almost broke her father's heart. "Your aunt must have had him there on purpose," Mr. Wharton had said. But Emily would neither accuse nor defend her aunt. "I at least knew nothing of it," she said. "I know that," Mr. Wharton had ejaculated. "I know that. I don't accuse you of anything, my dear,—except of thinking that you understand the world better than I do." Then Emily had retired and Mr. Wharton had been left to pass half the night in a perplexed reverie, feeling that he would be forced ultimately to give way, and yet certain that by doing so he would endanger his child's happiness.

He was very angry with his sister-in-law, and on

the next day, early in the morning, he attacked her. "I think you have betrayed me," he said.

"What do you mean by that, Mr. Wharton?"

"You have had this man here on purpose that he might make love to Emily."

"I have done no such thing. You told me yourself that they were not to be kept apart. He comes here, and it would be very odd indeed if I were to tell the servants that he is not to be admitted. If you want to quarrel with me, of course you can. I have always endeavoured to be a good friend to Emily."

"It is not being a good friend to her, bringing her and this adventurer together."

"I don't know why you call him an adventurer. But you are so very odd in your ideas! He is received everywhere, and is always at the Duchess of Omnium's."

"I don't care a fig about the Duchess."

"I dare say not. Only the Duke happens to be Prime Minister, and his house is considered to have the very best society that England, or indeed Europe, can give. And I think it is something in a young man's favour when it is known that he associates with such persons as the Duke of Omnium. I believe that most fathers would have a regard to the company which a man keeps when they think of their daughter's marrying."

"I ain't thinking of her marrying. I don't want her to marry;—not this man at least. And I fancy the Duchess of Omnium is just as likely to have scamps in her drawing-room as any other lady in London."

"And do such men as Mr. Happerton associate with scamps?"

"I don't know anything about Mr. Happerton,—and I don't care anything about him."

"He has £20,000 a year out of his business. And does Everett associate with scamps?"

"Very likely."

"I never knew any one so much prejudiced as you are, Mr. Wharton. When you have a point to carry there 's nothing you won't say. I suppose it comes from being in the courts."

"The long and the short of it is this," said the lawyer; "if I find that Emily is brought here to meet Mr. Lopez, I must forbid her to come at all."

"You must do as you please about that. But to tell you the truth, Mr. Wharton, I think the mischief is done. Such a girl as Emily, when she has taken it into her head to love a man, is not likely to give him up."

"She has promised to have nothing to say to him without my sanction."

"We all know what that means. You 'll have to give way. You 'll find that it will be so. The stern parent who dooms his daughter to perpetual seclusion because she won't marry the man he likes, does n't belong to this age."

"Who talks about seclusion?"

"Do you suppose that she 'll give up the man she loves because you don't like him? Is that the way girls live now-a-days? She won't run away with him, because she 's not one of that sort; but unless you 're harder-hearted than I take you to be, she 'll make your life a burden to you. And as for betraying you, that 's nonsense. You 've no right to say it. I 'm not going to quarrel with you whatever you may say, but you 've no right to say it."

Mr. Wharton, as he went away to Lincoln's Inn, bewailed himself because he knew that he was not hard-hearted. What his sister-in-law had said to him in that respect was true enough. If he could only rid himself of a certain internal ague which made him feel that his life was, indeed, a burden to him while his daughter was unhappy, he need only remain passive and simply not give the permission without which his daughter would not ever engage herself to this man. But the ague troubled every hour of his present life. That sister-in-law of his was a silly, vulgar, worldly, and most untrustworthy woman;—but she had understood what she was saying.

And there had been something in that argument about the Duchess of Omnium's parties, and Mr. Happerton, which had its effect. If the man did live with the great and wealthy, it must be because they thought well of him and of his position. The fact of his being a "nasty foreigner," and probably of Jewish descent, remained. To him, Wharton, the man must always be distasteful. But he could hardly maintain his opposition to one of whom the choice spirits of the world thought well. And he tried to be fair on the subject. It might be that it was a prejudice. Others probably did not find a man to be odious because he was of foreign extraction and known by a foreign name. Others would not suspect a man of being of Jewish blood because he was swarthy, or even object to him if he were a Jew by descent. But it was wonderful to him that his girl should like such a man,—should like such a man well enough to choose him as the one companion of her life. She had been brought up to prefer English men, and English think-

ing, and English ways,—and English ways, too, somewhat of a past time. He thought as did Brabantio, that it could not be that without magic his daughter who had shunned—

> "The wealthy curled darlings of our nation,
> Would ever have, to incur a general mock,
> Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
> Of such a thing as"—

this distasteful Portuguese.

That evening he said nothing further to his daughter, but sat with her, silent and disconsolate. Later in the evening, after she had gone to her room, Everett came in while the old man was still walking up and down the drawing-room. "Where have you been?" asked the father,—not caring a straw as to any reply when he asked the question, but roused almost to anger by the answer when it came.

"I have been dining with Lopez at the club."

"I believe you live with that man."

"Is there any reason, sir, why I should not?"

"You know that there is good reason why there should be no peculiar intimacy. But I don't suppose that my wishes, or your sister's welfare, will interest you."

"That is severe, sir."

"I am not such a fool as to suppose that you are to quarrel with a man because I don't approve his addressing your sister; but I do think that while this is going on, and while he perseveres in opposition to my distinct refusal, you need not associate with him in any special manner."

"I don't understand your objection to him, sir."

"I dare say not. There are a great many things you don't understand. But I do object."

"He 's a very rising man. Mr. Roby was saying to me just now——"

"Who cares a straw what a fool like Roby says?"

"I don't mean Uncle Dick, but his brother,—who, I suppose, is somebody in the world. He was saying to me just now that he wondered why Lopez does not go into the House;—that he would be sure to get a seat if he chose, and safe to make a mark when he got there."

"I dare say he could get into the House. I don't know any well-to-do blackguard of whom you might not predict as much. A seat in the House of Commons does n't make a man a gentleman as far as I can see."

"I think every one allows that Ferdinand Lopez is a gentleman."

"Who was his father?"

"I did n't happen to know him, sir."

"And who was his mother? I don't suppose you will credit anything because I say it, but as far as my experience goes, a man does n't often become a gentleman in the first generation. A man may be very worthy, very clever, very rich,—very well worth knowing if you will;—but when one talks of admitting a man into close family communion by marriage, one would, I fancy, wish to know something of his father and mother." Then Everett escaped, and Mr. Wharton was again left to his own meditations. Oh, what a peril, what a trouble, what a labyrinth of difficulties was a daughter! He must either be known as a stern, hard-hearted parent, utterly indifferent to his child's

feelings, using with tyranny the power over her which came to him only from her sense of filial duty,—or else he must give up his own judgment, and yield to her in a matter as to which he believed that such yielding would be most pernicious to her own interests.

Hitherto he really knew nothing of the man's means;—nor, if he could have his own way, did he want such information. But, as things were going now, he began to feel that if he could hear anything averse to the man he might thus strengthen his hands against him. On the following day he went into the City, and called on an old friend, a banker,—one whom he had known for nearly half a century, and of whom, therefore, he was not afraid to ask a question. For Mr. Wharton was a man not prone, in the ordinary intercourse of life, either to ask or to answer questions. "You don't know anything, do you, of a man named Ferdinand Lopez?"

"I have heard of him. But why do you ask?"

"Well; I have a reason for asking. I don't know that I quite wish to say what my reason is."

"I have heard of him as connected with Hunky's house," said the banker,—"or rather with one of the partners in the house."

"Is he a man of means?"

"I imagine him to be so;—but I know nothing. He has rather large dealings, I take it, in foreign stocks. Is he after my old friend, Miss Wharton?"

"Well;—yes."

"You had better get more information than I can give you. But, of course, before anything of that kind was done you would see that money was settled." This was all he heard in the City, and this was not

satisfactory. He had not liked to tell his friend that he wished to hear that the foreigner was a needy adventurer,—altogether untrustworthy; but that had really been his desire. Then he thought of the £60,000 which he himself destined for his girl. If the man were to his liking there would be money enough. Though he had been careful to save money, he was not a greedy man, even for his children. Should his daughter insist on marrying this man he could take care that she should never want a sufficient income.

As a first step,—a thing to be done almost at once,—he must take her away from London. It was now July, and the custom of the family was that the house in Manchester Square should be left for two months, and that the flitting should take place about the middle of August. Mr. Wharton usually liked to postpone the flitting, as he also liked to hasten the return. But now it was a question whether he had not better start at once,—start somewhither, and probably for a much longer period than the usual vacation. Should he take the bull by the horns, and declare his purpose of living for the next twelvemonth at——; well, it did not much matter where; Dresden, he thought, was a long way off, and would do as well as any place. Then it occurred to him that his cousin, Sir Alured, was in town, and that he had better see his cousin before he came to any decision. They were, as usual, expected at Wharton Hall this autumn, and that arrangement could not be abandoned without explanation.

Sir Alured Wharton was a baronet, with a handsome old family place on the Wye in Herefordshire, whose forefathers had been baronets since baronets were first

created, and whose earlier forefathers had lived at Wharton Hall much before that time. It may be imagined therefore that Sir Alured was proud of his name, of his estate, and of his rank. But there were drawbacks to his happiness. As regarded his name, it was to descend to a nephew whom he specially disliked,—and with good cause. As to his estate, delightful as it was in many respects, it was hardly sufficient to maintain his position with that plentiful hospitality which he would have loved;—and other property he had none. And as to his rank he had almost become ashamed of it, since,—as he was wont to declare was now the case,—every prosperous tallow-chandler throughout the country was made a baronet as a matter of course. So he lived at home through the year with his wife and daughters, not pretending to the luxury of a season in London for which his modest three or four thousand a year did not suffice;—and so living, apart from all the friction of clubs, parliaments, and mixed society, he did veritably believe that his dear country was going utterly to the dogs. He was so staunch in politics that during the doings of the last quarter of a century,—from the repeal of the corn laws down to the ballot,—he had honestly declared one side to be as bad as the other. Thus he felt that all his happiness was to be drawn from the past. There was nothing of joy or glory to which he could look forward either on behalf of his country or his family. His nephew,—and alas, his heir,—was a needy spendthrift, with whom he would hold no communication. The family settlement for his wife and daughters would leave them but poorly off; and though he did struggle to save something, the duty of

living as Sir Alured Wharton of Wharton Hall should live made those struggles very ineffective. He was a melancholy, proud, ignorant man, who could not endure a personal liberty, and who thought the assertion of social equality on the part of men of lower rank to amount to the taking of personal liberty;—who read little or nothing, and thought that he knew the history of his country because he was aware that Charles I. had had his head cut off, and that the Georges had come from Hanover. If Charles I. had never had his head cut off, and if the Georges had never come from Hanover, the Whartons would now probably be great people and Britain a great nation. But the Evil One had been allowed to prevail, and everything had gone astray, and Sir Alured now had nothing of this world to console him but a hazy retrospect of past glories, and a delight in the beauty of his own river, his own park, and his own house. Sir Alured, with all his foibles and with all his faults, was a pure-minded, simple gentleman, who could not tell a lie, who could not do a wrong, and who was earnest in his desire to make those who were dependent on him comfortable, and, if possible, happy. Once a year he came up to London for a week, to see his lawyers, and get measured for a coat, and go to the dentist. These were the excuses which he gave, but it was fancied by some that his wig was the great moving cause. Sir Alured and Mr. Wharton were second cousins, and close friends. Sir Alured trusted his cousin altogether in all things, believing him to be the great legal luminary of Great Britain, and Mr. Wharton returned his cousin's affection, entertaining something akin to reverence for the man who was the

head of his family. He dearly loved Sir Alured,—and loved Sir Alured's wife and two daughters. Nevertheless, the second week at Wharton Hall became always tedious to him, and the fourth, fifth, and sixth weeks frightful with ennui.

Perhaps it was with some unconscious dread of this tedium that he made a sudden suggestion to Sir Alured in reference to Dresden. Sir Alured had come to him at his chambers, and the two old men were sitting together near the open window. Sir Alured delighted in the privilege of sitting there, which seemed to confer upon him something of an insight into the inner ways of London life beyond what he could get at his hotel or his wigmaker's. "Go to Dresden;—for the winter!" he exclaimed.

"Not only for the winter. We should go at once."

"Not before you come to Wharton!" said the amazed baronet.

Mr. Wharton replied in a low, sad voice, "In that case we should not go down to Herefordshire at all." The baronet looked hurt as well as unhappy. "Yes, I know what you will say, and how kind you are."

"It is n't kindness at all. You always come. It would be breaking up everything."

"Everything has to be broken up sooner or later. One feels that as one grows older."

"You and I, Abel, are just of an age. Why should you talk to me like this? You are strong enough, whatever I am. Why should n't you come? Dresden! I never heard of such a thing. I suppose it 's some nonsense of Emily's."

Then Mr. Wharton told his whole story. "Nonsense of Emily's!" he began. "Yes, it is nonsense,—

worse than you think. But she does n't want to go abroad." The father's plaint need n't be repeated to the reader as it was told to the baronet. Though it was necessary that he should explain himself, yet he tried to be reticent. Sir Alured listened in silence. He loved his cousin Emily, and, knowing that she would be rich, knowing her advantages of birth, and recognising her beauty, had expected that she would make a match creditable to the Wharton family. But a Portuguese Jew! A man who had never been even known to allude to his own father! For by degrees Mr. Wharton had been driven to confess all the sins of the lover, though he had endeavoured to conceal the extent of his daughter's love.

"Do you mean that Emily—favours him?"

"I am afraid so."

"And would she,—would she—do anything without your sanction?" He was always thinking of the disgrace attaching to himself by reason of his nephew's vileness, and now, if a daughter of the family should also go astray, so as to be exiled from the bosom of the Whartons, how manifest would it be that all the glory was departing from their house!

"No! She will do nothing without my sanction. She has given her word,—which is gospel." As he spoke the old lawyer struck his hand upon the table.

"Then why should you run away to Dresden?"

"Because she is unhappy. She will not marry him, —or even see him, if I forbid it. But she is near him."

"Herefordshire is a long way off," said the baronet, pleading.

"Change of scene is what she should have," said the father.

'There can't be more of a change than she 'd get at Wharton. She always did like Wharton. It was there that she met Arthur Fletcher." The father only shook his head as Arthur Fletcher's name was mentioned. "Well,—that is sad. I always thought she 'd give way about Arthur at last."

"It is impossible to understand a young woman," said the lawyer. With such an English gentleman as Arthur Fletcher on one side, and with this Portuguese Jew on the other, it was to him Hyperion to a Satyr. A darkness had fallen over his girl's eyes, and for a time her power of judgment had left her.

"But I don't see why Wharton should not do just as well as Dresden," continued the baronet. Mr. Wharton found himself quite unable to make his cousin understand that the greater disruption caused by a residence abroad, the feeling that a new kind of life had been considered necessary for her, and that she must submit to the new kind of life, might be gradually effective, while the journeyings and scenes which had been common to her year after year would have no effect. Nevertheless he gave way. They could hardly start to Germany at once, but the visit to Wharton might be accelerated; and the details of the residence abroad might be there arranged. It was fixed, therefore, that Mr. Wharton and Emily should go down to Wharton Hall at any rate before the end of July.

"Why do you go earlier than usual, papa?" Emily asked him afterwards.

"Because I think it best," he replied angrily. She ought at any rate to understand the reason.

"Of course I shall be ready, papa. You know that

I always like Wharton. There is no place on earth I like so much, and this year it will be especially pleasant to me to go out of town. But——"

"But what?"

"I can't bear to think that I shall be taking you away."

"I 've got to bear worse things than that, my dear."

"Oh, papa, do not speak to me like that! Of course I know what you mean. There is no real reason for your going. If you wish it I will promise you that I will not see him." He only shook his head, —meaning to imply that a promise which could go no farther than that would not make him happy. "It will be just the same, papa,—either here, or at Wharton, or elsewhere. You need not be afraid of me."

"I am not afraid of you;—but I am afraid for you. I fear for your happiness,—and for my own."

"So do I, papa. But what can be done? I suppose sometimes people must be unhappy. I can't change myself, and I can't change you. I find myself to be as much bound to Mr. Lopez as though I were his wife."

"No, no! you should n't say so. You 've no right to say so."

"But I have given you a promise, and I certainly will keep it. If we must be unhappy, still we need not,—need not quarrel; need we, papa?" Then she came up to him and kissed him,—whereupon he went out of the room wiping his eyes.

That evening he again spoke to her, saying merely a word. "I think, my dear, we 'll have it fixed that we go on the 30th. Sir Alured seemed to wish it."

"Very well, papa;—I shall be quite ready."

CHAPTER XIV.

A LOVER'S PERSEVERANCE.

FERDINAND LOPEZ learned immediately through Mrs. Roby that the early departure for Herefordshire had been fixed. "I should go to him and speak to him very plainly," said Mrs. Roby. "He can't bite you."

"I 'm not in the least afraid of his biting me."

"You can talk so well! I should tell him everything, especially about money,—which I 'm sure is all right."

"Yes,—that is all right," said Lopez, smiling.

"And about your people."

"Which I 've no doubt you think is all wrong."

"I don't know anything about it," said Mrs. Roby, "and I don't much care. He has old-world notions. At any rate you should say something, so that he should not be able to complain to her that you had kept him in the dark. If there is anything to be known, it 's much better to have it known."

"But there is nothing to be known."

"Then tell him nothing;—but still tell it to him. After that you must trust to her. I don't suppose she 'd go off with you."

"I 'm sure she would n't."

"But she 's as obstinate as a mule. She 'll get the better of him if you really mean it." He assured her

that he really did mean it, and determined that he would take her advice as to seeing, or endeavouring to see, Mr. Wharton once again. But before doing so he thought it to be expedient to put his house into order, so that he might be able to make a statement of his affairs if asked to do so. Whether they were flourishing or the reverse, it might be necessary that he should have to speak of them,—with, at any rate, apparent candour.

The reader may, perhaps, remember that in the month of April Ferdinand Lopez had managed to extract a certain signature from his unfortunate City friend, Sexty Parker, which made that gentleman responsible for the payment of a considerable sum of money before the end of July. The transaction had been one of an unmixed painful nature to Mr. Parker. As soon as he came to think of it, after Lopez had left him, he could not prevail upon himself to forgive himself for his folly. That he,—he, Sextus Parker,—should have been induced by a few empty words to give his name for seven hundred and fifty pounds without any consideration or possibility of benefit! And the more he thought of it the more sure he was that the money was lost. The next day he confirmed his own fears, and before a week was gone he had written down the sum as gone. He told nobody. He did not like to confess his folly. But he made some inquiry about his friend,—which was absolutely futile. No one that he knew seemed to know anything of the man's affairs. But he saw his friend from time to time in the City, shining as only successful men do shine, and he heard of him as one whose name was becoming known in the City. Still he suffered

grievously. His money was surely gone. A man does not fly a kite in that fashion till things with him have reached a bad pass.

So it was with Mr. Parker all through May and to the end of June,—the load ever growing heavier and heavier as the time became nearer. Then, while he was still afflicted with a heaviness of spirits which had never left him since that fatal day, who but Ferdinand Lopez should walk into his office, wearing the gayest smile and with a hat splendid as hats are splendid only in the City. And nothing could be more "jolly" than his friend's manner,—so much so that Sexty was almost lifted up into temporary jollity himself. Lopez, seating himself, almost at once began to describe a certain speculation into which he was going rather deeply, and as to which he invited his friend Parker's co-operation. He was intending, evidently, not to ask, but to confer a favour.

"I rather think that steady business is best," said Parker. "I hope it 's all right about that £750."

"Ah; yes;—I meant to have told you. I did n't want the money, as it turned out, for much above a fortnight, and as there was no use in letting the bill run out, I settled it." So saying he took out a pocket-book, extracted the bill, and showed it to Sexty. Sexty's heart fluttered in his bosom. There was his name still on the bit of paper, and it might still be used. Having it shown to him after this fashion in its mid-career, of course he had strong ground for hope. But he could not bring himself to put out his hand for it. "As to what you say about steady business, of course that 's very well," said Lopez. "It depends upon whether a man wants to make a small income or a

large fortune." He still held the bill as though he were going to fold it up again, and the importance of it was so present to Sexty's mind that he could hardly digest the argument about the steady business. "I own that I am not satisfied with the former," continued Lopez, "and that I go in for the fortune." As he spoke he tore the bill into three or four bits, apparently without thinking of it, and let the fragments fall upon the floor. It was as though a mountain had been taken off Sexty's bosom. He felt almost inclined to send out for a bottle of champagne on the moment, and the arguments of his friend rang in his ears with quite a different sound. The allurements of a steady income paled before his eyes, and he too began to tell himself, as he had often told himself before, that if he would only keep his eyes open and his heart high there was no reason why he too should not become a City millionaire. But on that occasion Lopez left him soon, without saying very much about his favourite speculation. In a few days, however, the same matter was brought before Sexty's eyes from another direction. He learned from a side wind that the house of Hunky & Sons was concerned largely in this business,—or at any rate he thought that he had so learned. The ease with which Lopez had destroyed that bill six weeks before it was due had had great effect upon him. Those arguments about a large fortune or a small income still clung to him. Lopez had come to him about the business in the first instance, but it was now necessary that he should go to Lopez. He was, however, very cautious. He managed to happen to meet Lopez in the street, and introduced the subject in his own slap-dash, airy manner,—the result of which was,

that he had gone rather deep into two or three American mines before the end of July. But he had already made some money out of them, and, though he would find himself sometimes trembling before he had taken his daily allowance of port-wine and brandy and water, still he was buoyant, and hopeful of living in a park, with a palace at the West End, and a seat in Parliament. Knowing also as he did, that his friend Lopez was intimate with the Duchess of Omnium, he had much immediate satisfaction in the intimacy which these relations created. He was getting in the thin edge of the wedge, and would calculate as he went home to Ponders End how long it must be before he could ask his friend to propose him at some West End club. On one halcyon summer evening Lopez had dined with him at Ponders End, had smiled on Mrs. Parker, and played with the hopeful little Parkers. On that occasion Sexty had assured his wife that he regarded his friendship with Ferdinand Lopez as the most fortunate circumstance of his life. "Do be careful, Sexty," the poor woman had said. But Parker had simply told her that she understood nothing about business. On that evening Lopez had thoroughly imbued him with the conviction that if you will only set your mind that way, it is quite as easy to amass a large fortune as to earn a small income.

About a week before the departure of the Whartons for Herefordshire, Lopez, in compliance with Mrs. Roby's councils, called at the chambers in Stone Buildings. It is difficult to say that you will not see a man, when the man is standing just on the other side of an open door;—nor, in this case, was Mr. Wharton quite clear that he had better decline to see the man. But

while he was doubting,—at any rate before he had resolved upon denying his presence,—the man was there, inside his room. Mr. Wharton got up from his chair, hesitated a moment, and then gave his hand to the intruder in that half-unwilling, unsatisfactory manner which most of us have experienced when shaking hands with some cold-blooded, ungenial acquaintance. "Well, Mr. Lopez,—what can I do for you?" he said, as he re-seated himself. He looked as though he were at his ease and master of the situation. He had control over himself sufficient for assuming such a manner. But his heart was not high within his bosom. The more he looked at the man the less he liked him.

"There is one thing, and one thing only, you can do for me," said Lopez. His voice was peculiarly sweet, and when he spoke his words seemed to mean more than when they came from other mouths. But Mr. Wharton did not like sweet voices and mellow, soft words,—at least not from men's mouths.

"I do not think that I can do anything for you, Mr. Lopez," he said. There was a slight pause, during which the visitor put down his hat and seemed to hesitate. "I think your coming here can be of no avail. Did I not explain myself when I saw you before?"

"But, I fear, I did not explain myself. I hardly told my story."

"You can tell it, of course,—if you think the telling will do you any good."

"I was not able to say then, as I can say now, that your daughter had accepted my love."

"You ought not to have spoken to my daughter on the subject after what passed between us. I told you my mind frankly."

"Ah, Mr. Wharton, how was obedience in such a matter possible? What would you yourself think of a man who in such a position would be obedient? I did not seek her secretly. I did nothing underhand. Before I had once directly asked her for her love, I came to you."

"What 's the use of that, if you go to her immediately afterwards in manifest opposition to my wishes? You found yourself bound, as would any gentleman, to ask a father's leave, and when it was refused, you went on just as though it had been granted! Don't you call that a mockery?"

"I can say now, sir, what I could not say then. We love each other. And I am as sure of her as I am of myself when I assert that we shall be true to each other. You must know her well enough to be sure of that also."

"I am sure of nothing but of this;—that I will not give her my consent to become your wife."

"What is your objection, Mr. Wharton?"

"I explained it before as far as I found myself called upon to explain it."

"Are we both to be sacrificed for some reason that we neither of us understand?"

"How dare you take upon yourself to say that she does n't understand! Because I refuse to be more explicit to you, a stranger, do you suppose that I am equally silent to my own child?"

"In regard to money and social rank I am able to place your daughter as my wife in a position as good as she now holds as Miss Wharton."

"I care nothing about money, Mr. Lopez, and our ideas of social rank are perhaps different. I have noth-

ing further to say to you, and I do not think that you can have anything further to say to me that can be of any avail."

Then, having finished his speech, he got up from his chair and stood upright, thereby demanding of his visitor that he should depart.

"I think it no more than honest, Mr. Wharton, to declare this one thing. I regard myself as irrevocably engaged to your daughter; and she, although she has refused to bind herself to me by that special word, is, I am certain, as firmly fixed in her choice as I am in mine. My happiness, as a matter of course, can be nothing to you."

"Not much," said the lawyer, with angry impatience.

Lopez smiled, but he put down the word in his memory and determined that he would treasure it there. "Not much, at any rate as yet," he said. "But her happiness must be much to you."

"It is everything. But in thinking of her happiness I must look beyond what might be the satisfaction of the present day. You must excuse me, Mr. Lopez, if I say that I would rather not discuss the matter with you any further." Then he rang the bell and passed quickly into an inner room. When the clerk came Lopez of course marched out of the chambers and went his way.

Mr. Wharton had been very firm, and yet he was shaken. It was by degrees becoming a fixed idea in his mind that the man's material prosperity was assured. He was afraid even to allude to the subject when talking to the man himself, lest he should be overwhelmed by evidence on that subject. Then the

man's manner, though it was distasteful to Wharton himself, would, he well knew, recommend him to others. He was good-looking, he lived with people who were highly regarded, he could speak up for himself, and he was a favoured guest at Carlton House Terrace. So great had been the fame of the Duchess and her hospitality during the last two months, that the fact of the man's success in this respect had come home even to Mr. Wharton. He feared that the world would be against him, and he already began to dread the joint opposition of the world and his own child. The world of this day did not, he thought, care whether its daughters' husbands had or had not any fathers or mothers. The world as it was now did n't care whether its sons-in-law were Christian or Jewish; —whether they had the fair skin and bold eyes and uncertain words of an English gentleman, or the swarthy colour and false grimace and glib tongue of some inferior Latin race. But he cared for these things;— and it was dreadful to him to think that his daughter should not care for them. "I suppose I had better die and leave them to look after themselves," he said, as he returned to his arm-chair.

Lopez himself was not altogether ill-satisfied with the interview, not having expected that Mr. Wharton would have given way at once, and bestowed upon him then and there the kind father-in-law's "bless you, —bless you!" Something yet had to be done before the blessing would come, or the girl,—or the money. He had to-day asserted his own material success, speaking of himself as of a moneyed man,—and the statement had been received with no contradiction,— even without the suggestion of a doubt. He did not

therefore suppose that the difficulty was over; but he was clever enough to perceive that the aversion to him on another score might help to tide him over that difficulty. And if once he could call the girl his wife, he did not doubt but that he could build himself up with the old barrister's money. After leaving Lincoln's Inn he went at once to Berkeley Street, and was soon closeted with Mrs. Roby. "You can get her here before they go?" he said.

"She would n't come,—and if we arranged it without letting her know that you were to be here, she would tell her father. She has n't a particle of female intrigue in her."

"So much the better," said the lover.

"That 's all very well for you to say, but when a man makes such a tyrant of himself as Mr. Wharton is doing, a girl is bound to look after herself. If it was me I 'd go off with my young man before I 'd stand such treatment."

"You could give her a letter."

"She 'd only show it to her father. She is so perverse that I sometimes feel inclined to say that I 'll have nothing further to do with her."

"You 'll give her a message, at any rate?"

"Yes,—I can do that;—because I can do it in a way that won't seem to make it important."

"But I want my message to be very important. Tell her that I 've seen her father, and have offered to explain all my affairs to him,—so that he may know that there is nothing to fear on her behalf."

"It is n't any thought of money that is troubling him."

"But tell her what I say. He, however, would lis-

ten to nothing. Then I assured him that no consideration on earth would induce me to surrender her, and that I was as sure of her as I am of myself. Tell her that;—and tell her that I think she owes it to me to say one word to me before she goes into the country."

CHAPTER XV.

ARTHUR FLETCHER.

It may, I think, be a question whether the two old men acted wisely in having Arthur Fletcher at Wharton Hall when Emily arrived there. The story of his love for Miss Wharton, as far as it had as yet gone, must be shortly told. He had been the second son, as he was now the second brother, of a Herefordshire squire endowed with much larger property than that belonging to Sir Alured. John Fletcher, Esq., of Longbarns, some twelve miles from Wharton, was a considerable man in Herefordshire. This present squire had married Sir Alured's eldest daughter, and the younger brother had, almost since they were children together, been known to be in love with Emily Wharton. All the Fletchers and everything belonging to them were almost worshipped at Wharton Hall. There had been marriages between the two families certainly as far back as the time of Henry VII., and they were accustomed to speak, if not of alliances, at any rate of friendships, much anterior to that. As regards family, therefore, the pretensions of a Fletcher would always be held to be good by a Wharton. But this Fletcher was the very pearl of the Fletcher tribe. Though a younger brother, he had a very pleasant little fortune of his own. Though born to comfortable circumstances, he had worked so hard in his young days as to have already made for himself a name at the bar.

He was a fair-haired, handsome fellow, with sharp, eager eyes, with an aquiline nose, and just that shape of mouth and chin which such men as Abel Wharton regarded as characteristic of good blood. He was rather thin, about five feet ten in height, and had the character of being one of the best horsemen in the county. He was one of the most popular men in Herefordshire, and at Longbarns was almost as much thought of as the squire himself. He certainly was not the man to be taken, from his appearance, for a forlorn lover. He looked like one of those happy sons of the gods who are born to success. No young man of his age was more courted both by men and women. There was no one who in his youth had suffered fewer troubles from those causes of trouble which visit English young men,—occasional impetuosity, sternness of parents, native shyness, fear of ridicule, inability of speech, and a general pervading sense of inferiority combined with an ardent desire to rise to a feeling of conscious superiority. So much had been done for him by nature that he was never called upon to pretend to anything. Throughout the county those were the lucky men,—and those too were the happy girls,—who were allowed to call him Arthur. And yet this paragon was vainly in love with Emily Wharton, who, in the way of love, would have nothing to say to him, preferring,—as her father once said in his extremest wrath, —a greasy Jew adventurer out of the gutter!

And now it had been thought expedient to have him down to Wharton, although the lawyers' regular summer vacation had not yet commenced. But there was some excuse made for this, over and above the emergency of his own love, in the fact that his brother

John with Mrs. Fletcher was also to be at the Hall,—so that there was gathered there a great family party of the Whartons and Fletchers; for there was present there also old Mrs. Fletcher, a magnificently aristocratic and high-minded old lady, with snow-white hair, and lace worth fifty guineas a yard, who was as anxious as everybody else that her younger son should marry Emily Wharton. Something of the truth as to Emily Wharton's £60,000 was, of course, known to the Longbarns people. Not that I would have it inferred that they wanted their darling to sell himself for money. The Fletchers were great people, with great spirits, too good in every way for such baseness. But when love, old friendship, good birth, together with every other propriety as to age, manners, and conduct, can be joined to money, such a combination will always be thought pleasant.

When Arthur reached the Hall it was felt to be necessary that a word should be said to him as to that wretched interloper, Ferdinand Lopez. Arthur had not of late been often in Manchester Square. Though always most cordially welcomed there by old Wharton, and treated with every kindness by Emily Wharton short of that love which he desired, he had during the last three or four months abstained from frequenting the house. During the past winter, and early in the spring, he had pressed his suit,—but had been rejected, with warmest assurances of all friendship short of love. It had then been arranged between him and the elder Whartons that they should all meet down at the Hall, and there had been sympathetic expressions of hope that all might yet be well. But at that time little or nothing had been known of Ferdinand Lopez.

But now the old baronet spoke to him, the father having deputed the loathsome task to his friend,—being unwilling himself even to hint his daughter's disgrace. "Oh yes, I 've heard of him," said Arthur Fletcher. "I met him with Everett, and I don't think I ever took a stronger dislike to a man. Everett seems very fond of him." The baronet mournfully shook his head. It was sad to find that Whartons could go so far astray. "He goes to Carlton House Terrace,—to the Duchess's," continued the young man.

"I don't think that that is very much in his favour," said the baronet.

"I don't know that it is, sir;—only they try to catch all fish in that net that are of any use."

"Do you go there, Arthur?"

"I should if I were asked, I suppose. I don't know who would n't. You see it 's a Coalition affair, so that everybody is able to feel that he is supporting his party by going to the Duchess's."

"I hate Coalitions," said the baronet. "I think they are disgraceful."

"Well;—yes; I don't know. The coach has to be driven somehow. You must n't stick in the mud, you know. And after all, sir, the Duke of Omnium is a respectable man, though he is a liberal. A Duke of Omnium can't want to send the country to the dogs." The old man shook his head. He did not understand much about it, but he felt convinced that the Duke and his colleagues were sending the country to the dogs whatever might be their wishes. "I shan't think of politics for the next ten years, and so I don't trouble myself about the Duchess's parties, but I suppose I should go if I were asked."

Sir Alured felt that he had not as yet begun even to approach the difficult subject. "I 'm glad you don't like that man," he said.

"I don't like him at all. Tell me, Sir Alured;—why is he always going to Manchester Square?"

"Ah;—that is it."

"He has been there constantly;—has he not?"

"No;—no. I don't think that. Mr. Wharton does n't love him a bit better than you do. My cousin thinks him a most objectionable young man."

"But Emily?"

"Ah—— That 's where it is."

"You don't mean to say she—cares about that man!"

"He has been encouraged by that aunt of hers, who, as far as I can make out, is a very unfit sort of person to be much with such a girl as our dear Emily. I never saw her but once, and then I did n't like her at all."

"A vulgar, good-natured woman. But what can she have done? She can't have twisted Emily round her finger."

"I don't suppose there is very much in it, but I thought it better to tell you. Girls take fancies into their heads,—just for a time."

"He 's a handsome fellow, too," said Arthur Fletcher, musing in his sorrow.

"My cousin says he 's a nasty Jew-looking man."

"He 's not that, Sir Alured. He 's a handsome man, with a fine voice;—dark, and not just like an Englishman; but still I can fancy—— That 's bad news for me, Sir Alured."

"I think she 'll forget all about him down here."

"She never forgets anything. I shall ask her,

straight away. She knows my feeling about her, and I have n't a doubt but she 'll tell me. She 's too honest to be able to lie. Has he got any money?"

"My cousin seems to think that he 's rich."

"I suppose he is. Oh, Lord! That 's a blow. I wish I could have the pleasure of shooting him as a man might a few years ago. But what would be the good? The girl would only hate me the more after it. The best thing to do would be to shoot myself."

"Don't talk like that, Arthur."

"I shan't throw up the sponge as long as there 's a chance left, Sir Alured. But it will go badly with me if I 'm beat at last. I should n't have thought it possible that I should have felt anything so much." Then he pulled his hair, and thrust his hand into his waistcoat; and turned away, so that his old friend might not see the tear in his eye.

His old friend also was much moved. It was dreadful to him that the happiness of a Fletcher, and the comfort of the Whartons generally, should be marred by a man with such a name as Ferdinand Lopez. "She 'll never marry him without her father's consent," said Sir Alured.

"If she means it of course he 'll consent."

"That I 'm sure he won't. He does n't like the man a bit better than you do." Fletcher shook his head. "And he 's as fond of you as though you were already his son."

"What does it matter? If a girl sets her heart on marrying a man, of course she will marry him. If he had no money it might be different. But if he 's well off, of course he 'll succeed. Well——; I suppose

other men have borne the same sort of thing before and it has n't killed them."

"Let us hope, my boy. I think of her quite as much as of you."

"Yes,—we can hope. I shan't give it up. As for her, I dare say she knows what will suit her best. I 've nothing to say against the man,—excepting that I should like to cut him into four quarters."

"But a foreigner!"

"Girls don't think about that,—not as you do and Mr. Wharton. And I think they like dark, greasy men with slippery voices, who are up to dodges and full of secrets. Well, sir, I shall go to her at once and have it out."

"You 'll speak to my cousin?"

"Certainly I will. He has always been one of the best friends I ever had in my life. I know it has n't been his fault. But what can a man do? Girls won't marry this man or that because they 're told."

Fletcher did speak to Emily's father, and learned more from him than had been told him by Sir Alured. Indeed he learned the whole truth. Lopez had been twice with the father pressing his suit and had been twice repulsed, with as absolute denial as words could convey. Emily, however, had declared her own feeling openly, expressing her wish to marry the odious man, promising not to do so without her father's consent, but evidently feeling that that consent ought not to be withheld from her. All this Mr. Wharton told very plainly, walking with Arthur a little before dinner along a shaded, lonely path, which for half a mile ran along the very marge of the Wye at the bottom of the park. And then he went on to speak other words

which seemed to rob his young friend of all hope. The old man was walking slowly, with his hands clasped behind his back and with his eyes fixed on the path as he went;—and he spoke slowly, evidently weighing his words as he uttered them, bringing home to his hearer a conviction that the matter discussed was one of supreme importance to the speaker,—as to which he had thought much, so as to be able to express his settled resolutions. "I 've told you all now, Arthur;—only this. I do not know how long I may be able to resist this man's claim if it be backed by Emily's entreaties. I am thinking very much about it. I do not know that I have really been able to think of anything else for the last two months. It is all the world to me,—what she and Everett do with themselves; and what she may do in this matter of marriage is of infinitely greater importance than anything that can befall him. If he makes a mistake, it may be put right. But with a woman's marrying——, vestigia nulla retrorsum. She has put off all her old bonds and taken new ones, which must be her bonds for life. Feeling this very strongly, and disliking this man greatly,—disliking him, that is to say, in the view of this close relation,—I have felt myself to be justified in so far opposing my child by the use of a high hand. I have refused my sanction to the marriage both to him and to her,—though in truth I have been hard set to find any adequate reason for doing so. I have no right to fashion my girl's life by my prejudices. My life has been lived. Hers is to come. In this matter I should be cruel and unnatural were I to allow myself to be governed by any selfish inclination. Though I were to know that she would be lost to me forever, I must

give way,—if once brought to a conviction that by not giving way I should sacrifice her young happiness. In this matter, Arthur, I must not even think of you, though I love you well. I must consider only my child's welfare;—and in doing so I must try to sift my own feelings and my own judgment, and ascertain, if it be possible, whether my distaste to the man is reasonable or irrational;—whether I should serve her or sacrifice her by obstinacy of refusal. I can speak to you more plainly than to her. Indeed I have laid bare to you my whole heart and my whole mind. You have all my wishes, but you will understand that I do not promise you my continued assistance." When he had so spoken he put out his hand and pressed his companion's arm. Then he turned slowly into a little bypath which led across the park up to the house, and left Arthur Fletcher standing alone by the river's bank.

And so by degrees the blow had come full home to him. He had been twice refused. Then rumours had reached him,—not at first that he had a rival, but that there was a man who might possibly become so. And now this rivalry, and its success, were declared to him plainly. He told himself from this moment that he had not a chance. Looking forward he could see it all. He understood the girl's character sufficiently to be sure that she would not be wafted about, from one lover to another, by change of scene. Taking her to Dresden,—or to New Zealand,—would only confirm in her passion such a girl as Emily Wharton. Nothing could shake her but the ascertained unworthiness of the man,—and not that unless it were ascertained beneath her own eyes. And then years must

pass by before she would yield to another lover. There was a further question, too, which he did not fail to ask himself. Was the man necessarily unworthy because his name was Lopez, and because he had not come of English blood?

As he strove to think of this, if not coolly yet rationally, he sat himself down on the river's side and began to pitch stones off the path in among the rocks, among which at that spot the water made its way rapidly. There had been moments in which he had been almost ashamed of his love,—and now he did not know whether to be most ashamed or most proud of it. But he recognised the fact that it was crucifying him, and that it would continue to crucify him. He knew himself in London to be a popular man,—one of those for whom, according to general opinion, girls should sigh, rather than one who should break his heart sighing for a girl. He had often told himself that it was beneath his manliness to be despondent; that he should let such a trouble run from him like water from a duck's back, consoling himself with the reflection that if the girl had such bad taste she could hardly be worthy of him. He had almost tried to belong to that school which throws the heart away and rules by the head alone. He knew that others,—perhaps not those who knew him best, but who nevertheless were the companions of many of his hours,—gave him credit for such power. Why should a man afflict himself by the inward burden of an unsatisfied craving, and allow his heart to sink into his very feet because a girl would not smile when he wooed her?

> "If she be not fair to me,
> What care I how fair she be?"

He had repeated the lines to himself a score of times, and had been ashamed of himself because he could not make them come true to himself.

They had not come true in the least. There he was, Arthur Fletcher, whom all the world courted, with his heart in his very boots! There was a miserable load within him, absolutely palpable to his outward feeling,—a very physical pain,—which he could not shake off. As he threw the stones into the water he told himself that it must be so with him always. Though the world did pet him, though he was liked at his club, and courted in the hunting-field, and loved at balls and archery meetings, and reputed by old men to be a rising star, he told himself that he was so maimed and mutilated as to be only half a man. He could not reason about it. Nature had afflicted him with a certain weakness. One man has a hump;—another can hardly see out of his imperfect eyes;—a third can barely utter a few disjointed words. It was his fate to be constructed with some weak arrangement of the blood-vessels which left him in this plight. "The whole damned thing is nothing to me," he said, bursting out into absolute tears, after vainly trying to reassure himself by a recollection of the good things which the world still had in store for him.

Then he strove to console himself by thinking that he might take a pride in his love even though it were so intolerable a burden to him. Was it not something to be able to love as he loved? Was it not something at any rate that she to whom he had condescended to stoop was worthy of all love? But even here he could get no comfort,—being in truth unable to see very clearly into the condition of the thing. It was a dis-

grace to him,—to him within his own bosom,—that she should have preferred to him such a one as Ferdinand Lopez, and this disgrace he exaggerated, ignoring the fact that the girl herself might be deficient in judgment, or led away in her love by falsehood and counterfeit attractions. To him she was such a goddess that she must be right,—and therefore his own inferiority to such a one as Ferdinand Lopez was proved. He could take no pride in his rejected love. He would rid himself of it at a moment's notice if he knew the way. He would throw himself at the feet of some second-rate, tawdry, well-born, well-known beauty of the day,—only that there was not now left to him strength to pretend the feeling that would be necessary. Then he heard steps, and jumping up from his seat, stood just in the way of Emily Wharton and her cousin Mary. "Ain't you going to dress for dinner, young man?" said the latter.

"I shall have time if you have, any way," said Arthur, endeavouring to pluck up his spirits.

"That 's nice of him;—is n't it?" said Mary. "Why, we are dressed. What more do you want? We came out to look for you, though we did n't mean to come as far as this. It 's past seven now, and we are supposed to dine at a quarter past."

"Five minutes will do for me."

"But you 've got to get to the house. You need n't be in a tremendous hurry, because papa has only just come in from haymaking. They 've got up the last load, and there has been the usual ceremony. Emily and I have been looking at them."

"I wish I 'd been here all the time," said Emily. "I do so hate London in July."

"So do I," said Arthur,—"in July and all other times."

"You hate London!" said Mary.

"Yes,—and Herefordshire,—and other places generally. If I 've got to dress I 'd better get across the park as quick as I can go," and so he left them. Mary turned round and looked at her cousin, but at the moment said nothing. Arthur's passion was well known to Mary Wharton, but Mary had as yet heard nothing of Ferdinand Lopez.

CHAPTER XVI.

NEVER RUN AWAY!

During the whole of that evening there was a forced attempt on the part of all the party at Wharton Hall to be merry,—which, however, as is the case whenever such attempts are forced, was a failure. There had been a haymaking harvest-home which was supposed to give the special occasion for mirth, as Sir Alured farmed the land around the park himself, and was great in hay. "I don't think it pays very well," he said with a gentle smile, "but I like to employ some of the people myself. I think the old people find it easier with me than with the tenants."

"I should n't wonder," said his cousin;—"but that 's charity; not employment."

"No, no," exclaimed the baronet. "They work for their wages and do their best. Powell sees to that." Powell was the bailiff, who knew the length of his master's foot to a quarter of an inch, and was quite aware that the Wharton haymakers were not to be overtasked. "Powell does n't keep any cats about the place but what catch mice. But I am not quite sure that haymaking does pay."

"How do the tenants manage?"

"Of course they look to things closer. You would n't wish me to let the land up to the house door."

"I think," said old Mrs. Fletcher, "that a landlord

should consent to lose a little by his own farming. It does good in the long run." Both Mr. Wharton and Sir Alured felt that this might be very well at Longbarns, though it could hardly be afforded at Wharton.

"I don't think I lose much by my farming," said the squire of Longbarns. "I have about four hundred acres on hand, and I keep my accounts pretty regularly."

"Johnson is a very good man, I dare say," said the baronet.

"Like most of the others," continued the squire, "he 's very well as long as he 's looked after. I think I know as much about it as Johnson. Of course I don't expect a farmer's profit; but I do expect my rent, and I get it."

"I don't think I manage it quite in that way," said the baronet in a melancholy tone.

"I 'm afraid not," said the barrister.

"John is as hard upon the men as any one of the tenants," said John's wife, Mrs. Fletcher of Longbarns.

"I 'm not hard at all," said John, "and you understand nothing about it. I 'm paying three shillings a week more to every man, and eighteen pence a week more to every woman, than I did three years ago."

"That 's because of the Unions," said the barrister.

"I don't care a straw for the Unions. If the Unions interfered with my comfort I 'd let the land and leave the place."

"Oh, John!" ejaculated John's mother.

"I would not consent to be made a slave even for the sake of the country. But the wages had to be raised,—and having raised them I expect to get proper value for my money. If anything has to be given

away, let it be given away,—so that the people should know what it is that they receive."

"That 's just what we don't want to do here," said Lady Wharton, who did not often join in any of these arguments.

"You 're wrong, my lady," said her stepson. "You 're only breeding idleness when you teach people to think that they are earning wages without working for their money. Whatever you do with 'em let 'em know and feel the truth. It 'll be the best in the long run."

"I 'm sometimes happy when I think that I shan't live to see the long run," said the baronet. This was the manner in which they tried to be merry that evening after dinner at Wharton Hall. The two girls sat listening to their seniors in contented silence,—listening or perhaps thinking of their own peculiar troubles, while Arthur Fletcher held some book in his hand which he strove to read with all his might.

There was not one there in the room who did not know that it was the wish of the united families that Arthur Fletcher should marry Emily Wharton, and also that Emily had refused him. To Arthur of course the feeling that it was so could not but be an additional vexation; but the knowledge had grown up and had become common in the two families without any power on his part to prevent so disagreeable a condition of affairs. There was not one in that room, unless it was Mary Wharton, who was not more or less angry with Emily, thinking her to be perverse and unreasonable. Even to Mary her cousin's strange obstinacy was matter of surprise and sorrow,—for to her Arthur Fletcher was one of those demigods, who

should never be refused, who are not expected to do more than express a wish and be accepted. Her own heart had not strayed that way because she thought but little of herself, knowing herself to be portionless, and believing from long thought on the subject that it was not her destiny to be the wife of any man. She regarded Arthur Fletcher as being of all men the most lovable,—though, knowing her own condition, she did not dream of loving him. It did not become her to be angry with another girl on such a cause;—but she was amazed that Arthur Fletcher should sigh in vain.

The girl's folly and perverseness on this head were known to them all,—but as yet her greater folly and worse perverseness, her vitiated taste and dreadful partiality for the Portuguese adventurer, were known but to the two old men and to poor Arthur himself. When that sternly magnificent old lady, Mrs. Fletcher,—whose ancestors had been Welsh kings in the time of the Romans,—when she should hear this story, the roof of the old Hall would hardly be able to hold her wrath and her dismay! The old kings had died away, but the Fletchers, and the Vaughans,—of whom she had been one,—and the Whartons remained, a peculiar people in an age that was then surrendering itself to quick perdition, and with peculiar duties. Among these duties, the chiefest of them incumbent on females was that of so restraining their affections that they should never damage the good cause by leaving it. They might marry within the pale,—or remain single, as might be their lot. She would not take upon herself to say that Emily Wharton was bound to accept Arthur Fletcher, merely because such a marriage was fitting,—although she did think that there was much

perverseness in the girl, who might have taught herself, had she not been stubborn, to comply with the wishes of the families. But to love one below herself, a man without a father, a foreigner, a black Portuguese nameless Jew, merely because he had a bright eye, and a hook nose, and a glib tongue,—that a girl from the Whartons should do this——! It was so unnatural to Mrs. Fletcher that it would be hardly possible to her to be civil to the girl after she had heard that her mind and taste were so astray. All this Sir Alured knew and the barrister knew it,—and they feared her indignation the more because they sympathised with the old lady's feelings.

"Emily Wharton does n't seem to me to be a bit more gracious than she used to be," Mrs. Fletcher said to Lady Wharton that night. The two old ladies were sitting together upstairs, and Mrs. John Fletcher was with them. In such conferences Mrs. Fletcher always domineered,—to the perfect contentment of old Lady Wharton, but not equally so to that of her daughter-in-law.

"I 'm afraid she is not very happy," said Lady Wharton.

"She has everything that ought to make a girl happy, and I don't know what it is she wants. It makes me quite angry to see her so discontented. She does n't say a word, but sits there as glum as death. If I were Arthur I would leave her for six months, and never speak to her during the time."

"I suppose, mother," said the younger Mrs. Fletcher, —who called her husband's mother, mother, and her own mother, mamma,—"a girl need n't marry a man unless she likes him."

"But she should try to like him if it is suitable in other respects. I don't mean to take any trouble about it. Arthur need n't beg for any favour. Only I would n't have come here if I had thought that she had intended to sit silent like that always."

"It makes her unhappy, I suppose," said Lady Wharton, "because she can't do what we all want."

"Fall, lall! She 'd have wanted it herself if nobody else had wished it. I 'm surprised that Arthur should be so much taken with her."

"You 'd better say nothing about it, mother."

"I don't mean to say anything more about it. It 's nothing to me. Arthur can do very well in the world without Emily Wharton. Only a girl like that will sometimes make a disgraceful match; and we should all feel that."

"I don't think Emily will do anything disgraceful," said Lady Wharton. And so they parted.

In the meantime the two brothers were smoking their pipes in the housekeeper's room, which, at Wharton, when the Fletchers or Everett were there, was freely used for that purpose.

"Is n't it rather quaint of you," said the elder brother, "coming down here in the middle of term time?"

"It does n't matter much."

"I should have thought it would matter;—that is, if you mean to go on with it."

"I 'm not going to make a slave of myself about it, if you mean that. I don't suppose I shall ever marry,—and as for rising to be a swell in the profession, I don't care about it."

"You used to care about it,—very much. You used

to say that if you did n't get to the top it should n't be your own fault."

"And I have worked;—and I do work. But things get changed somehow. I 've half a mind to give it all up,—to raise a lot of money, and to start off with a resolution to see every corner of the world. I suppose a man could do it in about thirty years if he lived so long. It 's the kind of thing would suit me."

"Exactly. I don't know any fellow who has been more into society, and therefore you are exactly the man to live alone for the rest of your life. You 've always worked hard, I will say that for you;—and therefore you 're just the man to be contented with idleness. You 've always been ambitious and self-confident, and therefore it will suit you to a T, to be nobody and to do nothing." Arthur sat silent, smoking his pipe with all his might, and his brother continued,—"Besides,—you read sometimes, I fancy."

"I should read all the more."

"Very likely. But what you have read, in the old plays, for instance, must have taught you that when a man is cut up about a woman,—which I suppose is your case just at present,—he never does get over it. He never gets all right after a time,—does he? Such a one had better go and turn monk at once, as the world is over for him altogether;—is n't it? Men don't recover after a month or two, and go on just the same. You 've never seen that kind of thing yourself?"

"I 'm not going to cut my throat or turn monk either."

"No. There are so many steamboats and railways now that travelling seems easier. Suppose you go as far as St. Petersburg, and see if that does you any

good. If it don't, you need n't go on, because it will be hopeless. If it does,—why, you can come back, because the second journey will do the rest."

"There never was anything, John, that was n't matter for chaff with you."

"And I hope there never will be. People understand it when logic would be thrown away. I suppose the truth is the girl cares for somebody else." Arthur nodded his head. "Who is it? Any one I know?"

"I think not."

"Any one you know?"

"I have met the man."

"Decent?"

"Disgustingly indecent, I should say." John looked very black, for even with him the feeling about the Whartons and the Vaughans and the Fletchers was very strong. "He 's a man I should say you would n't let into Longbarns."

"There might be various reasons for that. It might be that you would n't care to meet him."

"Well;—no,—I don't suppose I should. But without that you would n't like him. I don't think he 's an Englishman."

"A foreigner!"

"He has got a foreign name."

"An Italian nobleman?"

"I don't think he 's noble in any country."

"Who the d—— is he?"

"His name is——Lopez."

"Everett's friend?"

"Yes;—Everett's friend. I ain't very much obliged to Master Everett for what he has done."

"I 've seen the man. Indeed, I may say I know

him,—for I dined with him once in Manchester Square. Old Wharton himself must have asked him there."

"He was there as Everett's friend. I only heard all this to-day, you know;—though I had heard about it before."

"And therefore you want to set out on your travels. As far as I saw I should say he is a clever fellow."

"I don't doubt that."

"And a gentleman."

"I don't know that he is not," said Arthur. "I 've no right to say a word against him. From what Wharton says I suppose he 's rich."

"He 's good-looking too;—at least he 's the sort of man that women like to look at."

"Just so. I 've no cause of quarrel with him,—nor with her. But——"

"Yes, my friend, I see it all," said the elder brother. "I think I know all about it. But running away is not the thing. One may be pretty nearly sure that one is right when one says that a man should n't run away from anything."

"The thing is to be happy if you can," said Arthur.

"No;—that is not the thing. I 'm not much of a philosopher, but as far as I can see there are two philosophies in the world. The one is to make one's self happy, and the other is to make other people happy. The latter answers the best."

"I can't add to her happiness by hanging about London."

"That 's a quibble. It is n't her happiness we are talking about,—nor yet your hanging about London. Gird yourself up and go on with what you 've got to do. Put your work before your feelings. What

does a poor man do, who goes out hedging and ditching with a dead child lying in his house? If you get a blow in the face, return it if it ought to be returned, but never complain of the pain. If you must have your vitals eaten into,—have them eaten into like a man. But, mind you,—these ain't your vitals."

"It goes pretty near."

"These ain't your vitals. A man gets cured of it,—almost always. I believe always; though some men get hit so hard they can never bring themselves to try it again. But tell me this. Has old Wharton given his consent?"

"No. He has refused," said Arthur, with strong emphasis.

"How is it to be, then?"

"He has dealt very fairly by me. He has done all he could to get rid of the man,—both with him and with her. He has told Emily that he will have nothing to do with the man. And she will do nothing without his sanction."

"Then it will remain just as it is."

"No, John; it will not. He has gone on to say that though he has refused,—and has refused roughly enough,—he must give way if he sees that she has really set her heart upon him. And she has."

"Has she told you so?"

"No;—but he has told me. I shall have it out with her to-morrow, if I can. And then I shall be off."

"You 'll be here for shooting on the 1st?"

"No. I dare say you 're right in what you say about sticking to my work. It does seem unmanly to run away because of a girl."

"Because of anything! Stop and face it, whatever it is."

"Just so;—but I can't stop and face her. It would do no good. For all our sakes I should be better away. I can get shooting with Musgrave and Carnegie in Perthshire. I dare say I shall go there and take a share with them."

"That 's better than going into all the quarters of the globe."

"I did n't mean that I was to surrender and start at once. You take a fellow up so short. I shall do very well, I 've no doubt, and shall be hunting here as jolly as ever at Christmas. But a fellow must say it all to somebody." The elder brother put his hand out and laid it affectionately upon the younger one's arm. "I 'm not going to whimper about the world like a whipped dog. The worst of it is so many people have known of this."

"You mean down here."

"Oh;—everywhere. I have never told them. It has been a kind of family affair and thought to be fit for general discussions."

"That 'll wear away."

"In the meantime it 's a bore. But that shall be the end of it. Don't you say another word to me about it, and I won't to you. And tell mother not to, or Sarah." Sarah was John Fletcher's wife. "It has got to be dropped, and let us drop it as quickly as we can. If she does marry this man I don't suppose she 'll be much at Longbarns or Wharton."

"Not at Longbarns certainly, I should say," replied John. "Fancy mother having to curtsey to her as Mrs. Lopez! And I doubt whether Sir Alured would

like him. He is n't of our sort. He 's too clever, too cosmopolitan,—a sort of man whitewashed of all prejudices, who would n't mind whether he ate horseflesh or beef if horseflesh were as good as beef, and never had an association in his life. I 'm not sure that he 's not on the safest side. Good night, old fellow. Pluck up, and send us plenty of grouse if you do go to Scotland."

John Fletcher, as I hope may have been already seen, was by no means a weak man or an indifferent brother. He was warm-hearted, sharp-witted, and, though perhaps a little self-opinionated, considered throughout the county to be one of the most prudent in it. Indeed, no one ever ventured to doubt his wisdom on all practical matters,—save his mother, who, seeing him almost every day, had a stronger bias towards her younger son. "Arthur has been hit hard about that girl," he said to his wife that night.

"Emily Wharton?"

"Yes;—your cousin Emily. Don't say anything to him, but be as good to him as you know how."

"Good to Arthur! Am not I always good to him?"

"Be a little more than usually tender with him. It makes one almost cry to see such a fellow hurt like that. I can understand it, though I never had anything of it myself."

"You never had, John," said the wife, leaning close upon the husband's breast as she spoke. "It all came very easily to you;—too easily perhaps."

"If any girl had ever refused me, I should have taken her at her word, I can tell you. There would have been no second 'hop' to that ball."

"Then I suppose I was right to catch it the first time?"

"I don't say how that may be."

"I was right! Oh, dear me!—Suppose I had doubted, just for once, and you had gone off. You would have tried once more;—would n't you?"

"You 'd have gone about like a broken-winged old hen, and have softened me that way."

"And now poor Arthur has had his wing broken."

"You must n't let on to know that it 's broken, and the wing will be healed in due time. But what fools girls are!"

"Indeed they are, John;—particularly me."

"Fancy a girl like Emily Wharton," said he, not condescending to notice her little joke, "throwing over a fellow like Arthur for a greasy, black foreigner."

"A foreigner!"

"Yes;—a man named Lopez. Don't say anything about it at present. Won't she live to find out the difference, and to know what she has done! I can tell her of one who won't pity her."

CHAPTER XVII.

GOOD-BYE.

Arthur Fletcher received his brother's teaching as true, and took his brother's advice in good part;—so that, before the morning following, he had resolved that however deep the wound might be, he would so live before the world, that the world should not see his wound. What people already knew they must know,—but they should learn nothing further either by words or signs from him. He would, as he had said to his brother, "have it out with Emily;" and then, if she told him plainly that she loved the man, he would bid her adieu, simply expressing regret that their course for life should be divided. He was confident that she would tell him the entire truth. She would be restrained neither by false modesty, nor by any assumed unwillingness to discuss her own affairs with a friend so true to her as he had been. He knew her well enough to be sure that she recognised the value of his love though she could not bring herself to accept it. There are rejected lovers who, merely because they are lovers, become subject to the scorn and even to the disgust of the girls they love. But again there are men who, even when they are rejected, are almost loved, who are considered to be worthy of all reverence, almost of worship;—and yet the worshippers will not love them. Not analysing all this, but somewhat conscious of the light in which this girl regarded

him, he knew that what he might say would be treated with deference. As to shaking her,—as to talking her out of one purpose and into another,—that to him did not for a moment seem to be practicable. There was no hope of that. He hardly knew why he should endeavour to say a word to her before he left Wharton. And yet he felt that it must be said. Were he to allow her to be married to this man, without any further previous word between them, it would appear that he had resolved to quarrel with her forever. But now, at this very moment of time, as he lay in his bed, as he dressed himself in the morning, as he sauntered about among the new hay-stacks with his pipe in his mouth after breakfast, he came to some conclusion in his mind very much averse to such quarrelling.

He had loved her with all his heart. It had not been a mere drawing-room love begotten between a couple of waltzes, and fostered by five minutes in a crush. He knew himself to be a man of the world, and he did not wish to be other than he was. He could talk among men as men talked, and act as men acted;—and he could do the same with women. But there was one person who had been to him above all, and round everything, and under everything. There had been a private nook within him into which there had been no entrance but for the one image. There had been a holy of holies, which he had guarded within himself, keeping it free from all outer contamination for his own use. He had cherished the idea of a clear fountain of ever-running water which would at last be his, always ready for the comfort of his own lips. Now all his hope was shattered, his trust was gone, and his longing disappointed. But the person was the

same person, though she could not be his. The nook was there, though she would not fill it. The holy of holies was not less holy, though he himself might not dare to lift the curtain. The fountain would still run, —still the clearest fountain of all,—though he might not put his lips to it. He would never allow himself to think of it with lessened reverence, or with changed ideas as to her nature.

And then, as he stood leaning against a ladder which still kept its place against one of the hay-ricks, and filled his second pipe unconsciously, he had to realise to himself the probable condition of his future life. Of course she would marry this man with very little further delay. Her father had already declared himself to be too weak to interfere much longer with her wishes. Of course Mr. Wharton would give way. He had himself declared that he would give way. And then,—what sort of life would be her life? No one knew anything about the man. There was an idea that he was rich,—but wealth such as his, wealth that is subject to speculation, will fly away at a moment's notice. He might be cruel, a mere adventurer, or a thorough ruffian for all that was known of him. There should, thought Arthur Fletcher to himself, be more stability in the giving and taking of wives than could be reckoned upon here. He became old in that half-hour, taking home to himself and appreciating many saws of wisdom and finger-directions of experience which hitherto had been to him matters almost of ridicule. But he could only come to this conclusion, —that as she was still to be to him his holy of holies though he might not lay his hand upon the altar, his fountain though he might not drink of it, the one im-

age which alone could have filled that nook, he would not cease to regard her happiness when she should have become the wife of this stranger. With the stranger himself he never could be on friendly terms; —but for the stranger's wife there should always be a friend, if the friend were needed.

About an hour before lunch John Fletcher, who had been hanging about the house all the morning in a manner very unusual to him, caught Emily Wharton as she was passing through the hall, and told her that Arthur was in a certain part of the grounds and wished to speak to her. "Alone?" she asked. "Yes, certainly alone." "Ought I to go to him, John?" she asked again. "Certainly I think you ought." Then he had done his commission and was able to apply himself to whatever business he had on hand.

Emily at once put on her hat, took her parasol, and left the house. There was something distasteful to her in the idea of this going out at a lover's bidding, to meet him; but like all Whartons and all Fletchers, she trusted John Fletcher. And then she was aware that there were circumstances which might make such a meeting as this serviceable. She knew nothing of what had taken place during the last four-and-twenty hours. She had no idea that in consequence of words spoken to him by her father and his brother, Arthur Fletcher was about to abandon his suit. There would have been no doubt about her going to meet him had she thought this. She supposed that she would have to hear again the old story. If so, she would hear it, and would then have an opportunity of telling him that her heart had been given entirely to another. She knew all that she owed to him. After a fashion she did love

him. He was entitled to all kindest consideration from her hands. But he should be told the truth.

As she entered the shrubbery he came out to meet her, giving her his hand with a frank, easy air and a pleasant smile. His smile was as bright as the ripple of the sea, and his eye would then gleam, and the slightest sparkle of his white teeth would be seen between his lips, and the dimple of his chin would show itself deeper than at other times. "It is very good of you. I thought you 'd come. John asked you, I suppose."

"Yes;—he told me you were here, and he said I ought to come."

"I don't know about ought, but I think it better. Will you mind walking on, as I 've got something that I want to say?" Then he turned and she turned with him into the little wood. "I 'm not going to bother you any more, my darling," he said. "You are still my darling, though I will not call you so after this." Her heart sank almost in her bosom as she heard this, —though it was exactly what she would have wished to hear. But now there must be some close understanding between them and some tenderness. She knew how much she had owed him, how good he had been to her, how true had been his love; and she felt that words would fail her to say that which ought to be said. "So you have given yourself to—one Ferdinand Lopez!"

"Yes," she said, in a hard, dry voice. "Yes; I have. I do not know who told you; but I have."

"Your father told me. It was better,—was it not? —that I should know. You are not sorry that I should know?"

"It is better."

"I am not going to say a word against him."

"No;—do not do that."

"Nor against you. I am simply here now to let you know that——I retire."

"You will not quarrel with me, Arthur?"

"Quarrel with you! I could not quarrel with you, if I would. No;—there shall be no quarrel. But I do not suppose we shall see each other very often."

"I hope we may."

"Sometimes, perhaps. A man should not, I think, affect to be friends with a successful rival. I dare say he is an excellent fellow, but how is it possible that he and I should get on together? But you will always have one,—one besides him,—who will love you best in this world."

"No;—no;—no."

"It must be so. There will be nothing wrong in that. Every one has some dearest friend, and you will always be mine. If anything of evil should ever happen to you,—which of course there won't,—there would be some one who would—— But I don't want to talk buncum; I only want you to believe me. Good-bye, and God bless you." Then he put out his right hand, holding his hat under his left arm.

"You are not going away?"

"To-morrow, perhaps. But I will say my real good-bye to you here, now, to-day. I hope you may be happy. I hope it with all my heart. Good-bye. God bless you!"

"Oh, Arthur!" Then she put her hand in his.

"Oh, I have loved you so dearly. It has been with my whole heart. You have never quite understood me, but it has been as true as heaven. I have thought

sometimes that had I been a little less earnest about it, I should have been a little less stupid. A man should n't let it get the better of him, as I have done. Say good-bye to me, Emily."

"Good-bye," she said, still leaving her hand in his.

"I suppose that 's about all. Don't let them quarrel with you here if you can help it. Of course at Longbarns they won't like it for a time. Oh,—if it could have been different!" Then he dropped her hand, and turning his back quickly upon her, went away along the path.

She had expected and had almost wished that he should kiss her. A girl's cheek is never so holy to herself as it is to her lover,—if he do love her. There would have been something of reconciliation, something of a promise of future kindness in a kiss, which even Ferdinand would not have grudged. It would, for her, have robbed the parting of that bitterness of pain which his words had given to it. As to all that he had made no calculation; but the bitterness was there for him, and he could have done nothing that would have expelled it.

She wept bitterly as she returned to the house. There might have been cause for joy. It was clear enough that her father, though he had shown no sign to her of yielding, was nevertheless prepared to yield. It was her father who had caused Arthur Fletcher to take himself off, as a lover really dismissed. But, at this moment, she could not bring herself to look at that aspect of the affair. Her mind would revert to all those choicest moments in her early years in which she had been happy with Arthur Fletcher; in which she had first learned to love him, and had then taught

herself to understand by some confused and perplexed lesson that she did not love him as men and women love. But why should she not so have loved him? Would she not have done so could she then have understood how true and firm he was? And then, independently of herself, throwing herself aside for the time, as she was bound to do when thinking of one so good to her as Arthur Fletcher, she found that no personal joy could drown the grief which she shared with him. For a moment the idea of a comparison between the men forced itself upon her,—but she drove it from her as she hurried back to the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DUKE OF OMNIUM THINKS OF HIMSELF.

The blaze made by the Duchess of Omnium during the three months of the season up in London had been very great, but it was little in comparison with the social coruscation expected to be achieved at Gatherum Castle,—little at least as far as public report went, and the general opinion of the day. No doubt the house in Carlton Gardens had been thrown open as the house of no Prime Minister, perhaps of no duke, had been opened before in this country; but it had been done by degrees, and had not been accompanied by such a blowing of trumpets as was sounded with reference to the entertainments at Gatherum. I would not have it supposed that the trumpets were blown by the direct order of the Duchess. The trumpets were blown by the customary trumpeters as it became known that great things were to be done,—all newspapers and very many tongues lending their assistance, till the sounds of the instruments almost frightened the Duchess herself. "Is n't it odd," she said to her friend, Mrs. Finn, "that one can't have a few friends down in the country without such a fuss about it as the people are making?" Mrs. Finn did not think that it was odd, and so she said. Thousands of pounds were being spent in a very conspicuous way. Invitations to the place even for a couple of days,—for twenty-four hours,—

had been begged for abjectly. It was understood everywhere that the Prime Minister was bidding for greatness and popularity. Of course the trumpets were blown very loudly. "If people don't take care," said the Duchess, "I 'll put everybody off and have the whole place shut up. I 'd do it for sixpence, now."

Perhaps of all the persons, much or little concerned, the one who heard the least of the trumpets,—or rather who was the last to hear them,—was the Duke himself. He could not fail to see something in the newspapers, but what he did see did not attract him so frequently or so strongly as it did others. It was a pity, he thought, that a man's social and private life should be made subject to so many remarks, but this misfortune was one of those to which wealth and rank are liable. He had long recognised that fact, and for a time endeavoured to believe that his intended sojourn at Gatherum Castle was not more public than are the autumn doings of other dukes and other prime ministers. But gradually the trumpets did reach even his ears. Blind as he was to many things himself, he always had near to him that other duke who was never blind to anything. "You are going to do great things at Gatherum this year," said the Duke.

"Nothing particular, I hope," said the Prime Minister, with an inward trepidation,—for gradually there had crept upon him a fear that his wife was making a mistake.

"I thought it was going to be very particular."

"It 's Glencora's doing."

"I don't doubt but that her Grace is right. Don't suppose that I am criticising your hospitality. We are to be at Gatherum ourselves about the end of the

month. It will be the first time I shall have seen the place since your uncle's time."

The Prime Minister at this moment was sitting in his own particular room at the Treasury Chambers, and before the entrance of his friend had been conscientiously endeavouring to define for himself, not a future policy, but the past policy of the last month or two. It had not been for him a very happy occupation. He had become the Head of the Government, —and had not failed, for there he was, still the head of the Government, with a majority at his back, and the six months' vacation before him. They who were entitled to speak to him confidentially as to his position were almost vehement in declaring his success. Mr. Rattler, about a week ago, had not seen any reason why the Ministry should not endure at least for the next four years. Mr. Roby, from the other side, was equally confident. But, on looking back at what he had done, and indeed on looking forward into his future intentions, he could not see why he, of all men, should be Prime Minister. He had once been Chancellor of the Exchequer, filling that office through two halcyon sessions, and he had known the reason why he had held it. He had ventured to assure himself at the time that he was the best man whom his party could then have found for that office, and he had been satisfied. But he had none of that satisfaction now. There were men under him who were really at work. The Lord Chancellor had legal reforms on foot. Mr. Monk was busy, heart and soul, in regard to income tax and brewers' licenses,—making our poor Prime Minister's mouth water. Lord Drummond was active among the colonies. Phineas Finn had at any rate

his ideas about Ireland. But with the Prime Minister,—so at least the Duke told himself,—it was all a blank. The policy confided to him and expected at his hands was that of keeping together a Coalition Ministry. That was a task that did not satisfy him. And now, gradually,—very slowly indeed at first, but still with a sure step,—there was creeping upon him the idea that this power of cohesion was sought for, and perhaps found, not in his political capacity, but in his rank and wealth. It might, in fact, be the case that it was his wife the Duchess,—that Lady Glencora, of whose wild impulses and general impracticability he had always been in dread,—that she with her dinner-parties and receptions, with her crowded salons, her music, her picnics, and social temptations, was Prime Minister rather than he himself. It might be that this had been understood by the coalesced parties,—by everybody, in fact, except himself. It had, perhaps, been found that in the state of things then existing, a ministry could be best kept together, not by parliamentary capacity, but by social arrangements, such as his Duchess, and his Duchess alone, could carry out. She and she only would have the spirit and the money and the sort of cleverness required. In such a state of things he of course, as her husband, must be the nominal Prime Minister.

There was no anger in his bosom as he thought of this. It would be hardly just to say that there was jealousy. His nature was essentially free from jealousy. But there was shame,—and self-accusation at having accepted so great an office with so little fixed purpose as to great work. It might be his duty to subordinate even his pride to the service of his coun-

try, and to consent to be a faineant minister, a gilded Treasury log, because by remaining in that position he would enable the Government to be carried on. But how base the position, how mean, how repugnant to that grand idea of public work which had hitherto been the motive power of all his life! How would he continue to live if this thing were to go on from year to year,—he pretending to govern while others governed,—stalking about from one public hall to another in a blue ribbon, taking the highest place at all tables, receiving mock reverence, and known to all men as faineant First Lord of the Treasury? Now, as he had been thinking of all this, the most trusted of his friends had come to him, and had at once alluded to the very circumstances which had been pressing so heavily on his mind. "I was delighted," continued the elder Duke, "when I heard that you had determined to go to Gatherum Castle this year."

"If a man has a big house I suppose he ought to live in it, sometimes."

"Certainly. It was for such purposes as this now intended that your uncle built it. He never became a public man, and therefore, though he went there, every year I believe, he never really used it."

"He hated it,—in his heart. And so do I. And so does Glencora. I don't see why any man should have his private life interrupted by being made to keep a huge caravansary open for persons he does n't care a straw about."

"You would not like to live alone."

"Alone,—with my wife and children,—I would certainly, during a portion of the year at least."

"I doubt whether such a life, even for a month,

even for a week, is compatible with your duties. You would hardly find it possible. Could you do without your private secretaries? Would you know enough of what is going on, if you did not discuss matters with others? A man cannot be both private and public at the same time."

"And therefore one has to be chopped up, like 'a reed out of the river,' as the poet said, 'and yet not give sweet music afterwards.'" The Duke of St. Bungay said nothing in answer to this, as he did not understand the chopping of the reed. "I 'm afraid I 've been wrong about this collection of people down at Gatherum," continued the younger Duke. "Glencora is impulsive, and has overdone the thing. Just look at that." And he handed a letter to his friend. The old Duke put on his spectacles and read the letter through, —which ran as follows:—

"Private.

"My Lord Duke,—I do not doubt but that your Grace is aware of my position in regard to the public press of the country, and I beg to assure your Grace that my present proposition is made, not on account of the great honour and pleasure which would be conferred upon myself should your Grace accede to it, but because I feel assured that I might so be best enabled to discharge an important duty for the benefit of the public generally.

"Your Grace is about to receive the whole fashionable world of England and many distinguished foreign ambassadors at your ancestral halls, not solely for social delight,—for a man in your Grace's high position is not able to think only of a pleasant life,—but in order

that the prestige of your combined ministry may be so best maintained. That your Grace is thereby doing a duty to your country no man who understands the country can doubt. But it must be the case that the country at large should interest itself in your festivities, and should demand to have accounts of the gala doings of your ducal palace. Your Grace will probably agree with me that these records could be better given by one empowered by yourself to give them, by one who had been present, and who would write in your Grace's interest, than by some interloper who would receive his tale only at second hand.

"It is my purport now to inform your Grace that should I be honoured by an invitation to your Grace's party at Gatherum, I should obey such a call with the greatest alacrity, and would devote my pen and the public organ which is at my disposal to your Grace's service with the readiest good-will.

"I have the honour to be,
"My Lord Duke,
"Your Grace's most obedient
"And very humble Servant,
"QUINTUS SLIDE."

The old Duke, when he had read the letter, laughed heartily. "Is n't that a terribly bad sign of the times?" said the younger.

"Well;—hardly that, I think. The man is both a fool and a blackguard; but I don't think we are therefore to suppose that there are many fools and blackguards like him. I wonder what he really has wanted."

"He has wanted me to ask him to Gatherum."

"He can hardly have expected that. I don't think he can have been such a fool. He may have thought that there was a possible off chance, and that he would not lose even that for want of asking. Of course you won't notice it."

"I have asked Warburton to write to him, saying that he cannot be received at my house. I have all letters answered unless they seem to have come from insane persons. Would it not shock you if your private arrangements were invaded in that way?"

"He can't invade you."

"Yes, he can. He does. That is an invasion. And whether he is there or not, he can and will write about my house. And though no one else will make himself such a fool as he has done by his letter, nevertheless even that is a sign of what others are doing. You yourself were saying just now that we were going to do something,—something particular, you said."

"It was your word, and I echoed it. I suppose you are going to have a great many people?"

"I am afraid Glencora has overdone it. I don't know why I should trouble you by saying so, but it makes me uneasy."

"I can't see why."

"I fear she has got some idea into her head of astounding the world by display."

"I think she has got an idea of conquering the world by graciousness and hospitality."

"It is as bad. It is, indeed, the same thing. Why should she want to conquer what we call the world? She ought to want to entertain my friends because they are my friends; and if from my public position I have more so-called friends than would trouble me in a

happier condition of private life, why, then, she must entertain more people. There should be nothing beyond that. The idea of conquering people, as you call it, by feeding them, is to me abominable. If it goes on it will drive me mad. I shall have to give up everything, because I cannot bear the burden." This he said with more excitement, with stronger passion, than his friend had ever seen in him before; so much so that the old Duke was frightened. "I ought never to have been where I am," said the Prime Minister, getting up from his chair and walking about the room.

"Allow me to assure you that in that you are decidedly mistaken," said his Grace of St. Bungay.

"I cannot make even you see the inside of my heart in such a matter as this," said his Grace of Omnium.

"I think I do. It may be that in saying so I claim for myself greater power than I possess, but I think I do. But let your heart say what it may on the subject, I am sure of this,—that when the Sovereign, by the advice of two outgoing Ministers, and with the unequivocally expressed assent of the House of Commons, calls on a man to serve her and the country, that man cannot be justified in refusing, merely by doubts about his own fitness. If your health is failing you, you may know it, and say so. Or it may be that your honour, —your faith to others,—should forbid you to accept the position. But of your own general fitness you must take the verdict given by such general consent. They have seen clearer than you have done what is required, and know better than you can know how that which is wanted is to be secured."

"If I am to be here and do nothing, must I remain?"

"A man cannot keep together the Government of a country and do nothing. Do not trouble yourself about this crowd at Gatherum. The Duchess, easily, almost without exertion, will do that which to you, or to me either, would be impossible. Let her have her way, and take no notice of the Quintus Slides." The Prime Minister smiled, as though this repeated allusion to Mr. Slide's letter had brought back his good humour, and said nothing further then as to his difficulties. There were a few words to be spoken as to some future Cabinet meeting, something perhaps to be settled as to some man's work or position, a hint to be given, and a lesson to be learned,—for of these inner Cabinet Councils between these two statesmen there was frequent use; and then the Duke of St. Bungay took his leave.

Our Duke, as soon as his friend had left him, rang for his private secretary, and went to work diligently as though nothing had disturbed him. I do not know that his labours on that occasion were of a very high order. Unless there be some special effort of law-making before the country, some reform bill to be passed, some attempt at education to be made, some fetters to be forged or to be relaxed, a Prime Minister is not driven hard by the work of his portfolio,—as are his colleagues. But many men were in want of many things, and contrived by many means to make their wants known to the Prime Minister. A dean would fain be a bishop, or a judge a chief justice, or a commissioner a chairman, or a secretary a commissioner. Knights would fain be baronets, baronets barons, and barons earls. In one guise or another the wants of gentlemen were made known, and there was work to

be done. A ribbon cannot be given away without breaking the hearts of, perhaps, three gentlemen and of their wives and daughters. And then he went down to the House of Lords,—for the last time this session as far as work was concerned. On the morrow legislative work would be over, and the gentlemen of Parliament would be sent to their country houses, and to their pleasant country joys.

It had been arranged that on the day after the prorogation of Parliament the Duchess of Omnium should go down to Gatherum to prepare for the coming of the people, which was to commence about three days later, taking her ministers, Mrs. Finn and Locock, with her; and that her husband with his private secretaries and despatch boxes was to go for those three days to Matching, a smaller place than Gatherum, but one to which they were much better accustomed. If, as the Duchess thought to be not unlikely, the Duke should prolong his stay for a few days at Matching, she felt confident that she would be able to bear the burden of the Castle on her own shoulders. She had thought it to be very probable that he would prolong his stay at Matching, and if the absence were not too long, this might be well explained to the assembled company. In the Duchess's estimation a Prime Minister would lose nothing by pleading the nature of his business as an excuse for such absence,—or by having such a plea made for him. Of course he must appear at last. But as to that she had no fear. His timidity, and his conscience also, would both be too potent to allow him to shirk the nuisance of Gatherum altogether. He would come, she was sure; but she did not much care how long he deferred his coming. She was, therefore, not a little

surprised when he announced to her an alteration in his plans. This he did not many hours after the Duke of St. Bungay had left him at the Treasury Chambers. "I think I shall go down with you at once to Gatherum," he said.

"What is the meaning of that?" The Duchess was not skilled in hiding her feelings, at any rate from him, and declared to him at once by her voice and eye that the proposed change was not gratifying to her.

"It will be better. I had thought that I would get a quiet day or two at Matching. But as the thing has to be done, it may as well be done at first. A man ought to receive his own guests. I can't say that I look forward to any great pleasure in doing so on this occasion;—but I shall do it." It was very easy to understand also the tone of his voice. There was in it something of offended dignity, something of future marital intentions,—something also of the weakness of distress.

She did not want him to come at once to Gatherum. A great deal of money was being spent, and the absolute spending was not yet quite perfected. There might still be possibility of interference. The tents were not all pitched. The lamps were not as yet all hung in the conservatories. Wagons would still be coming in and workmen still be going out. He would think less of what had been done if he could be kept from seeing it while it was being done. And the greater crowd which would be gathered there by the end of the first week would carry off the vastness of the preparations. As to money, he had given her almost carte blanche, having at one vacillatory period of his Prime Ministership been talked by her into some agreement with her own

plans. And in regard to money he would say to himself that he ought not to interfere with any whim of hers on that score, unless he thought it right to crush the whim on some other score. Half what he possessed had been hers, and even if during this year he were to spend more than his income,—if he were to double or even treble the expenditure of past years,—he could not consume the additions to his wealth which had accrued and heaped themselves up since his marriage. He had therefore written a line to his banker, and a line to his lawyer, and he had himself seen Locock, and his wife's hands had been loosened. "I did n't think, your Grace," said Locock, "that his Grace would be so very,—very—very——" "Very what, Locock?" "So very free, your Grace." The Duchess, as she thought of it, declared to herself that her husband was the truest nobleman in all England. She revered, admired, and almost loved him. She knew him to be infinitely better than herself. But she could hardly sympathise with him, and was quite sure that he did not sympathise with her. He was so good about the money! But yet it was necessary that he should be kept in the dark as to the spending of a good deal of it. Now he was going to upset a portion of her plans by coming to Gatherum before he was wanted. She knew him to be obstinate, but it might be possible to turn him back to his old purpose by clever manipulation.

"Of course it would be much nicer for me," she said.

"That alone would be sufficient."

"Thanks, dear. But we had arranged for people to come at first whom I thought you would not specially care to meet. Sir Orlando and Mr. Rattler will be there with their wives."

"I have become quite used to Sir Orlando and Mr. Rattler."

"No doubt, and therefore I wanted to spare you something of their company. The Duke, whom you really do like, is n't coming yet. I thought, too, you would have your work to finish off."

"I fear it is of a kind that won't bear finishing off. However, I have made up my mind, and have already told Locock to send word to the people at Matching to say that I shall not be there yet. How long will all this last at Gatherum?"

"Who can say?"

"I should have thought you could. People are not coming, I suppose, for an indefinite time."

"As one set leaves, one asks others."

"Have n't you asked enough as yet? I should like to know when we may expect to get away from the place."

"You need n't stay till the end, you know."

"But you must."

"Certainly."

"And I should wish you to go with me, when we do go to Matching."

"Oh, Plantagenet," said the wife, "what a Darby and Joan kind of thing you like to have it!"

"Yes, I do. The Darby and Joan kind of thing is what I like."

"Only Darby is to be in an office all day, and in Parliament all night,—and Joan is to stay at home."

"Would you wish me not to be in an office, and not to be in Parliament? But don't let us misunderstand each other. You are doing the best you can to further what you think to be my interests."

"I am," said the Duchess.

"I love you the better for it, day by day." This so surprised her, that as she took him by the arm, her eyes were filled with tears. "I know that you are working for me quite as hard as I work myself, and that you are doing so with the pure ambition of seeing your husband a great man."

"And myself a great man's wife."

"It is the same thing. But I would not have you overdo your work. I would not have you make yourself conspicuous by anything like display. There are ill-natured people who will say things that you do not expect, and to which I should be more sensitive than I ought to be. Spare me such pain as this, if you can." He still held her hand as he spoke, and she answered him only by nodding her head. "I will go down with you to Gatherum on Friday." Then he left her.

CHAPTER XIX.

VULGARITY.

THE Duke and Duchess with their children and personal servants reached Gatherum Castle the day before the first crowd of visitors was expected. It was on a lovely autumn afternoon, and the Duke, who had endeavoured to make himself pleasant during the journey, had suggested that as soon as the heat would allow them they would saunter about the grounds and see what was being done. They could dine late, at half-past eight or nine, so that they might be walking from seven to eight. But the Duchess when she reached the Castle declined to fall into this arrangement. The journey had been hot and dusty, and she was a little cross. They reached the place about five, and then she declared that she would have a cup of tea and lie down; she was too tired to walk; and the sun, she said, was still scorchingly hot. He then asked that the children might go with him; but the two little girls were weary and travel-worn, and the two boys, the elder of whom was home from Eton and the younger from some minor Eton, were already out about the place after their own pleasures. So the Duke started for his walk alone.

The Duchess certainly did not wish to have to inspect the works in conjunction with her husband. She knew how much there was that she ought still to do herself, how many things that she herself ought to see.

But she could neither do anything nor see anything to any purpose under his wing. As to lying down, that she knew to be quite out of the question. She had already found out that the life which she had adopted was one of incessant work. But she was neither weak nor idle. She was quite prepared to work,—if only she might work after her own fashion and with companions chosen by herself. Had not her husband been so perverse, she would have travelled down with Mrs. Finn, whose coming was now postponed for two days, and Locock would have been with her. The Duke had given directions which made it necessary that Locock's coming should be postponed for a day, and this was another grievance. She was put out a good deal, and began to speculate whether her husband was doing it on purpose to torment her. Nevertheless, as soon as she knew that he was out of the way, she went to her work. She could not go out among the tents and lawns and conservatories, as she would probably meet him. But she gave orders as to bed-chambers, saw to the adornments of the reception-rooms, had an eye to the banners and martial trophies suspended in the vast hall, and the busts and statues which adorned the corners, looked in on the plate which was being prepared for the great dining-room, and superintended the moving about of chairs, sofas, and tables generally. "You may take it as certain, Mrs. Pritchard," she said to the housekeeper, "that there will never be less than forty for the next two months."

"Forty to sleep, my lady?" To Pritchard the Duchess had for many years been Lady Glencora, and she perhaps understood that her mistress liked the old appellation.

"Yes, forty to sleep, and forty to eat, and forty to drink. But that 's nothing. Forty to push through twenty-four hours every day! Do you think you 've got everything that you want?"

"It depends, my lady, how long each of 'em stays."

"One night! No,—say two nights on an average."

"That makes shifting the beds very often;—does n't it, my lady?"

"Send up to Puddick's for sheets to-morrow. Why was n't that thought of before?"

"It was, my lady—and I think we shall do. We 've got the steam-washery put up."

"Towels!" suggested the Duchess.

"Oh yes, my lady. Puddick's did send a great many things?—a whole wagon-load there was come from the station. But the table-cloths ain't, none of 'em, long enough for the big table." The Duchess's face fell. "Of course there must be two. On them very long tables, my lady, there always is two."

"Why did n't you tell me, so that I could have had them made? It 's impossible,—impossible that one brain should think of it all. Are you sure you 've got enough hands in the kitchen?"

"Well, my lady;—we could n't do with more; and they ain't an atom of use,—only just in the way,—if you don't know something about 'em. I suppose Mr. Millepois will be down soon." This name, which Mrs. Pritchard called Milleypoise, indicated a French cook who was as yet unknown at the Castle.

"He 'll be here to-night."

"I wish he could have been here a day or two sooner, my lady, so as just to see about him."

"And how should we have got our dinner in town?

He won't make any difficulties. The confectioner did come?"

"Yes, my lady; and to tell the truth out at once, he was that drunk last night that——; oh dear, we did n't know what to do with him."

"I don't mind that before the affair begins. I don't suppose he 'll get tipsy while he has to work for all these people. You 've plenty of eggs?"

These questions went on so rapidly that in addition to the asking of them the Duchess was able to go through all the rooms before she dressed for dinner, and in every room she saw something to speak of, noting either perfection or imperfection. In the meantime the Duke had gone out alone. It was still hot, but he had made up his mind that he would enjoy his first holiday out of town by walking about his own grounds, and he would not allow the heat to interrupt him. He went out through the vast hall, and the huge front door, which was so huge and so grand that it was very seldom used. But it was now open by chance, owing to some incident of this festival time, and he passed through it and stood upon the grand terrace, with the well-known and much-lauded portico overhead. Up to the terrace, though it was very high, there ran a road, constructed upon arches, so that grand guests could drive almost into the house. The Duke, who was never grand himself, as he stood there looking at the far-stretching view before him, could not remember that he had ever but once before placed himself on that spot. Of what use had been the portico, and the marbles, and the huge pile of stone,—of what use the enormous hall just behind him, cutting the house in two, declaring aloud by its own aspect

and proportions that it had been built altogether for show and in no degree for use or comfort? And now as he stood there he could already see that men were at work about the place, that ground had been moved here, and grass laid down there, and a new gravel road constructed in another place. Was it not possible that his friends should be entertained without all these changes in the gardens? Then he perceived the tents, and descending from the terrace and turning to the left towards the end of the house he came upon a new conservatory. The exotics with which it was to be filled were at this moment being brought in on great barrows. He stood for a moment and looked, but said not a word to the men. They gazed at him, but evidently did not know him. How should they know him,—him, who was so seldom there, and who when there never showed himself about the place? Then he went farther afield from the house and came across more and more men. A great ha-ha fence had been made, enclosing on three sides a large flat and turfed parallelogram of ground, taken out of the park and open at one end to the gardens, containing, as he thought, about an acre. "What are you doing this for?" he said to one of the labourers. The man stared at him and at first seemed hardly inclined to make him an answer. "It be for the quality to shoot their bows and harrows," he said at last, as he continued the easy task of patting with his spade the completed work. He evidently regarded this stranger as an intruder who was not entitled to ask questions, even if he were permitted to wander about the grounds.

From one place he went on to another and found changes, and new erections, and some device for

throwing away money everywhere. It angered him to think that there was so little of simplicity left in the world that a man could not entertain his friends without such a fuss as this. His mind applied itself frequently to the consideration of the money, not that he grudged the loss of it, but the spending of it in such a cause. And then perhaps there occurred to him an idea that all this should not have been done without a word of consent from himself. Had she come to him with some scheme for changing everything about the place, making him think that the alterations were a matter of taste or of mere personal pleasure, he would probably have given his assent at once, thinking nothing of the money. But all this was sheer display. Then he walked up and saw the flag waving over the Castle, indicating that he, the Lord Lieutenant of the County, was present there on his own soil. That was right. That was as it should be, because the flag was waving in compliance with an acknowledged ordinance. Of all that properly belonged to his rank and station he could be very proud, and would allow no diminution of that outward respect to which they were entitled. Were they to be trenched on by his fault in his person, the rights of others to their enjoyment would be endangered, and the benefits accruing to his country from established marks of reverence would be imperilled. But here was an assumed and preposterous grandeur that was as much within the reach of some rich swindler or of some prosperous haberdasher as of himself,—having, too, a look of raw newness about it which was very distasteful to him. And then, too, he knew that nothing of all this would have been done unless he had become Prime Minister. Why on earth should a

man's grounds be knocked about because he becomes Prime Minister? He walked on arguing this within his own bosom, till he had worked himself almost up to anger. It was clear that he must henceforth take things more into his own hands, or he would be made to be absurd before the world. Indifference he knew he could bear. Harsh criticism he thought he could endure. But to ridicule he was aware that he was pervious. Suppose the papers were to say of him that he built a new conservatory and made an archery ground for the sake of maintaining the Coalition!

When he got back to the house he found his wife alone in the small room in which they intended to dine. After all her labours she was now reclining for the few minutes her husband's absence might allow her, knowing that after dinner there were a score of letters for her to write. "I don't think," said she, "I was ever so tired in my life."

"It is n't such a very long journey, after all."

"But it 's a very big house, and I 've been, I think, into every room since I have been here, and I 've moved most of the furniture in the drawing-rooms with my own hands, and I 've counted the pounds of butter, and inspected the sheets and table-cloths."

"Was that necessary, Glencora?"

"If I had gone to bed instead, the world, I suppose, would have gone on, and Sir Orlando Drought would still have led the House of Commons;—but things should be looked after, I suppose."

"There are people to do it. You are like Martha, troubling yourself with many things."

"I always felt that Martha was very ill-used. If there were no Marthas there would never be anything

fit to eat. But it 's odd how sure a wife is to be scolded. If I did nothing at all, that would n't please a busy, hard-working man like you."

"I don't know that I have scolded,—not as yet."

"Are you going to begin?"

"Not to scold, my dear. Looking back, can you remember that I ever scolded you?"

"I can remember a great many times when you ought."

"But to tell you the truth, I don't like all that you have done here. I cannot see that it was necessary."

"People make changes in their gardens without necessity sometimes."

"But these changes are made because of your guests. Had they been made to gratify your own taste I would have said nothing,—although even in that case I think you might have told me what you proposed to do."

"What;—when you are so burdened with work that you do not know how to turn?"

"I am never so burdened that I cannot turn to you. But, as you know, that is not what I complain of. If it were done for yourself, though it were the wildest vagary, I would learn to like it. But it distresses me to think that what might have been good enough for our friends before should be thought to be insufficient because of the office I hold. There is a—a—a—I was almost going to say vulgarity about it which distresses me."

"Vulgarity!" she exclaimed, jumping up from her sofa.

"I retract the word. I would not for the world say anything that should annoy you;—but pray, pray do not go on with it." Then again he left her.

Vulgarity! There was no other word in the language so hard to bear as that. He had, indeed, been careful to say that he did not accuse her of vulgarity,—but nevertheless the accusation had been made. Could you call your friend a liar more plainly than by saying to him that you would not say that he lied? They dined together, the two boys, also, dining with them, but very little was said at dinner. The horrid word was clinging to the lady's ears, and the remembrance of having uttered the word was heavy on the man's conscience. He had told himself very plainly that the thing was vulgar, but he had not meant to use the word. When uttered, it came even upon himself as a surprise. But it had been uttered; and, let what apology there may be made, a word uttered cannot be retracted. As he looked across the table at his wife, he saw that the word had been taken in deep dudgeon.

She escaped, to the writing of her letters she said, almost before the meal was done. "Vulgarity!" She uttered the word aloud to herself, as she sat herself down in the little room upstairs which she had assigned to herself for her own use. But though she was very angry with him, she did not, even in her own mind, contradict him. Perhaps it was vulgar. But why should n't she be vulgar, if she could most surely get what she wanted by vulgarity? What was the meaning of the word vulgarity? Of course she was prepared to do things,—was daily doing things,—which would have been odious to her had not her husband been a public man. She submitted, without unwillingness, to constant contact with disagreeable people. She lavished her smiles,—so she now said to herself,—on butchers and tinkers. What she said, what she read,

what she wrote, what she did, whither she went, to whom she was kind and to whom unkind,—was it not all said and done and arranged with reference to his and her own popularity? When a man wants to be Prime Minister he has to submit to vulgarity, and must give up his ambition if the task be too disagreeable to him. The Duchess thought that that had been understood, at any rate ever since the days of Coriolanus. "The old Duke kept out of it," she said to herself, "and chose to live in the other way. He had his choice. He wants it to be done. And when I do it for him because he can't do it for himself, he calls it by an ugly name!" Then it occurred to her that the world tells lies every day,—telling on the whole much more lies than truth,—but that the world has wisely agreed that the world shall not be accused of lying. One does n't venture to express open disbelief even of one's wife; and with the world at large a word spoken, whether lie or not, is presumed to be true of course,—because spoken. Jones has said it, and therefore Smith,—who has known the lie to be a lie,—has asserted his assured belief, lying again. But in this way the world is able to live pleasantly. How was she to live pleasantly if her husband accused her of vulgarity? Of course it was all vulgar, but why should he tell her so? She did not do it from any pleasure that she got from it.

The letters remained long unwritten, and then there came a moment in which she resolved that they should not be written. The work was very hard, and what good would come from it? Why should she make her hands dirty, so that even her husband accused her of vulgarity? Would it not be better to give it all up,

and be a great woman, une grande dame, of another kind,—difficult of access, sparing of her favours, aristocratic to the backbone,—a very Duchess of duchesses? The rôle would be one very easy to play. It required rank, money, and a little manner,—and these she possessed. The old Duke had done it with ease, without the slightest trouble to himself, and had been treated almost like a god because he had secluded himself. She could make the change even yet,—and as her husband told her that she was vulgar, she thought she would make it.

But at last, before she had abandoned her desk and paper, there had come to her another thought. Nothing to her was so distasteful as failure. She had known that there would be difficulties, and had assured herself that she would be firm and brave in overcoming them. Was not this accusation of vulgarity simply one of the difficulties which she had to overcome? Was her courage already gone from her? Was she so weak that a single word should knock her over,—and a word evidently repented of as soon as uttered? Vulgar! Well;—let her be vulgar as long as she gained her object. There had been no penalty of everlasting punishment denounced against vulgarity. And then a higher idea touched her, not without effect,—an idea which she could not analyse, but which was hardly on that account the less effective. She did believe thoroughly in her husband, to the extent of thinking him the fittest man in all the country to be its Prime Minister. His fame was dear to her. Her nature was loyal; and though she might, perhaps, in her younger days have been able to lean upon him with a more loving heart had he been other than he was, brighter,

more gay, given to pleasures, and fond of trifles, still, she could recognise merits with which her sympathy was imperfect. It was good that he should be England's Prime Minister, and therefore she would do all she could to keep him in that place. The vulgarity was a necessary essential. He might not acknowledge this,—might even, if the choice were left to him, refuse to be Prime Minister on such terms. But she need not, therefore, give way. Having in this way thought it all out, she took up her pen and completed the batch of letters before she allowed herself to go to bed.

CHAPTER XX.

SIR ORLANDO'S POLICY.

When the guests began to arrive our friend the Duchess had apparently got through her little difficulties, for she received them with that open, genial hospitality which is so delightful as coming evidently from the heart. There had not been another word between her and her husband as to the manner in which the thing was to be done, and she had determined that the offensive word should pass altogether out of her memory. The first comer was Mrs. Finn,—who came indeed rather as an assistant hostess than as a mere guest, and to her the Duchess uttered a few half playful hints as to her troubles. "Considering the time have n't we done marvels? Because it does look nice, —does n't it? There are no dirt heaps about, and it 's all as green as though it had been there since the Conquest. He does n't like it because it looks new. And we 've got forty-five bedrooms made up. The servants are all turned out over the stables somewhere,—quite comfortable, I assure you. Indeed, they like it. And by knocking down the ends of two passages we 've brought everything together. And the rooms are all numbered just like an inn. It was the only way. And I keep one book myself, and Locock has another. I have everybody's room, and where it is, and how long the tenant is to be allowed to occupy it. And

here 's the way everybody is to take everybody down to dinner for the next fortnight. Of course that must be altered, but it is easier when we have a sort of settled basis. And I have some private notes as to who should flirt with whom."

"You 'd better not let that lie about."

"Nobody could understand a word of it if they had it. A. B. always means X. Y. Z. And this is the code of the Gatherum Archery Ground. I never drew a bow in my life,—not a real bow in the flesh, that is, my dear,—and yet I 've made 'em all out, and had them printed. The way to make a thing go down is to give it some special importance. And I 've gone through the bill of fare for the first week with Millepois, who is a perfect gentleman,—perfect." Then she gave a little sigh as she remembered that word from her husband, which had so wounded her. "I used to think that Plantagenet worked hard when he was doing his decimal coinage; but I don't think he ever stuck to it as I have done."

"What does the Duke say to it all?"

"Ah; well, upon the whole he behaves like an angel. He behaves so well that half my time I think I 'll shut it all up and have done with it,—for his sake. And then, the other half, I 'm determined to go on with it, —also for his sake."

"He has not been displeased?"

"Ask no questions, my dear, and you 'll hear no stories. You have n't been married twice without knowing that women can't have everything smooth. He only said one word. It was rather hard to bear, but it has passed away."

That afternoon there was quite a crowd. Among

the first comers were Mr. and Mrs. Roby, and Mr. and Mrs. Rattler. And there were Sir Orlando and Lady Drought, Lord Ramsden, and Sir Timothy Beeswax. These gentlemen with their wives represented, for the time, the ministry of which the Duke was the head, and had been asked in order that their fealty and submission might be thus riveted. There were also there Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, with Lord Thrift and his daughter Angelica, who had belonged to former ministries,—one on the liberal and the other on the conservative side,—and who were now among the Duke's guests, in order that they and others might see how wide the Duke wished to open his hands. And there was our friend Ferdinand Lopez, who had certainly made the best use of his opportunities in securing for himself so great a social advantage as an invitation to Gatherum Castle. How could any father, who was simply a barrister, refuse to receive as his son-in-law a man who had been a guest at the Duke of Omnium's country house? And then there were certain people from the neighbourhood;—Frank Gresham of Greshamsbury, with his wife and daughter, the master of the hounds in those parts, a rich squire of old blood, and head of the family to which one of the aspirant Prime Ministers of the day belonged. And Lord Chiltern, another master of fox hounds, two counties off,—and also an old friend of ours,—had been asked to meet him, and had brought his wife. And there was Lady Rosina De Courcy, an old maid, the sister of the present Earl De Courcy, who lived not far off and had been accustomed to come to Gatherum Castle on state occasions for the last thirty years,—the only relic in those parts of a family which had lived there for many years in great

pride of place; for her elder brother, the earl, was a ruined man, and her younger brothers were living with their wives abroad, and her sisters had married rather lowly in the world, and her mother now was dead, and Lady Rosina lived alone in a little cottage outside the old park palings, and still held fast within her bosom all the old pride of the De Courcys. And then there were Captain Gunner and Major Pountney, two middle-aged young men, presumably belonging to the army, whom the Duchess had lately enlisted among her followers as being useful in their way. They could eat their dinners without being shy, dance on occasions, though very unwillingly, talk a little, and run on messages;—and they knew the peerage by heart, and could tell the details of every unfortunate marriage for the last twenty years. Each thought himself, especially since this last promotion, to be indispensably necessary to the formation of London society, and was comfortable in a conviction that he had thoroughly succeeded in life by acquiring the privilege of sitting down to dinner three times a week with peers and peeresses.

The list of guests has by no means been made as complete here as it was to be found in the county newspapers, and in the Morning Post of the time; but enough of names has been given to show of what nature was the party. "The Duchess has got rather a rough lot to begin with," said the major to the captain.

"Oh yes. I knew that. She wanted me to be useful, so of course I came. I shall stay here this week, and then be back in September." Up to this moment Captain Gunner had not received any invitation for September, but then there was no reason why he should not do so.

"I 've been getting up that archery code with her," said Pountney, "and I was pledged to come down and set it going. That little Gresham girl is n't a bad-looking thing."

"Rather flabby," said Captain Gunner.

"Very nice colour. She 'll have a lot of money, you know."

"There 's a brother," said the captain.

"Oh yes; there 's a brother, who will have the Greshamsbury property, but she 's to have her mother's money. There 's a very odd story about all that, you know." Then the major told the story, and told every particular of it wrongly. "A man might do worse than look there," said the major. A man might have done worse, because Miss Gresham was a very nice girl; but of course the major was all wrong about the money.

"Well;—now you 've tried it, what do you think about it?" This question was put by Sir Timothy to Sir Orlando as they sat in a corner of the archery ground, under the shelter of a tent, looking on while Major Pountney taught Mrs. Boffin how to fix an arrow on to her bow string. It was quite understood that Sir Timothy was inimical to the Coalition though he still belonged to it, and that he would assist in breaking it up if only there were a fair chance of his belonging to the party which would remain in power. Sir Timothy had been badly treated, and did not forget it. Now Sir Orlando had also of late shown some symptoms of a disturbed ambition. He was the leader of the House of Commons, and it had become an almost recognised law of the Constitution that the leader of the House of Commons should be the First Minister of the Crown. It was at least understood by

many that such was Sir Orlando's reading of the laws of the Constitution.

"We 've got along, you know," said Sir Orlando.

"Yes;—yes. We 've got along. Can you imagine any possible concatenation of circumstances in which we should not get along? There 's always too much good sense in the House for an absolute collapse. But are you contented?"

"I won't say I 'm not," said the cautious baronet. "I did n't look for very great things from a Coalition, and I did n't look for very great things from the Duke."

"It seems to me that the one achievement to which we 've all looked has been the reaching the end of the session in safety. We 've done that certainly."

"It is a great thing to do, Sir Timothy. Of course the main work of Parliament is to raise supplies;—and, when that has been done with ease, when all the money wanted has been voted without a break-down, of course Ministers are very glad to get rid of the Parliament. It is as much a matter of course that a Minister should dislike Parliament now as that a Stuart king should have done so two hundred and fifty years ago. To get a session over and done with is an achievement and a delight."

"No ministry can go on long on that far niente principle, and no Minister who accedes to it will remain long in any ministry." Sir Timothy in saying this might be alluding to the Duke, or the reference might be to Sir Orlando himself. "Of course I 'm not in the Cabinet, and am not entitled to say a word; but I think that if I were in the Cabinet, and if I were anxious,—which I confess I 'm not,—for a continuation of the present state of things, I should endeavour

to obtain from the Duke some idea of his policy for the next session." Sir Orlando was a man of certain parts. He could speak volubly,—and yet slowly,—so that reporters and others could hear him. He was patient, both in the House and in his office, and had the great gift of doing what he was told by men who understood things better than he did himself. He never went very far astray in his official business, because he always obeyed the clerks and followed precedents. He had been a useful man,—and would still have remained so had he not been lifted a little too high. Had he been only one in the ruck on the Treasury Bench he would have been useful to the end; but special honour and special place had been assigned to him, and therefore he desired still bigger things. The Duke's mediocrity of talent and of energy and of general governing power had been so often mentioned of late in Sir Orlando's hearing, that Sir Orlando had gradually come to think that he was the Duke's equal in the Cabinet, and that perhaps it behoved him to lead the Duke. At the commencement of their joint operations he had held the Duke in some awe, and perhaps something of that feeling in reference to the Duke personally still restrained him. The Dukes of Omnium had always been big people. But still it might be his duty to say a word to the Duke. Sir Orlando assured himself that if ever convinced of the propriety of doing so, he could say a word even to the Duke of Omnium. "I am confident that we should not go on quite as we are at present," said Sir Timothy as he closed the conversation.

"Where did they pick him up?" said the major to the captain, pointing with his head to Ferdinand

Lopez, who was shooting with Angelica Thrift and Mr. Boffin and one of the Duke's private secretaries.

"The Duchess found him somewhere. He 's one of those fabulously rich fellows out of the City who make a hundred thousand pounds at a blow. They say his people were grandees of Spain."

"Does anybody know him?" asked the major.

"Everybody soon will know him," answered the captain. "I think I heard that he 's going to stand for some place in the Duke's interest. He don't look the sort of fellow I like; but he 's got money and he comes here, and he 's good-looking,—and therefore he 'll be a success." In answer to this the major only grunted. The major was a year or two older than the captain, and therefore less willing even than his friend to admit the claims of new-comers to social honours.

Just at this moment the Duchess walked across the ground up to the shooters, accompanied by Mrs. Finn and Lady Chiltern. She had not been seen in the gardens before that day, and of course a little concourse was made round her. The major and the captain, who had been driven away by the success of Ferdinand Lopez, returned with their sweetest smiles. Mr. Boffin put down his treatise on the nature of Franchises, which he was studying in order that he might lead an opposition against the ministry next session, and even Sir Timothy Beeswax, who had done his work with Sir Orlando, joined the throng.

"Now I do hope," said the Duchess, "that you are all shooting by the new code. That is, and is to be, the Gatherum Archery Code, and I shall break my heart if anybody rebels."

"There are one or two men," said Major Pountney very gravely, "who won't take the trouble to understand it."

"Mr. Lopez," said the Duchess, pointing with her finger at our friend, "are you that rebel?"

"I fear I did suggest——" began Mr. Lopez.

"I will have no suggestions,—nothing but obedience. Here are Sir Timothy Beeswax and Mr. Boffin, and Sir Orlando Drought is not far off; and here is Mr. Rattler, than whom no authority on such a subject can be better. Ask them whether in other matters suggestions are wanted."

"Of course not," said Major Pountney.

"Now, Mr. Lopez, will you or will you not be guided by a strict and close interpretation of the Gatherum Code? Because, if not, I 'm afraid we shall feel constrained to accept your resignation."

"I won't resign, and I will obey," said Lopez.

"A good ministerial reply," said the Duchess. "I don't doubt but that in time you 'll ascend to high office and become a pillar of the Gatherum constitution. How does he shoot, Miss Thrift?"

"He will shoot very well indeed, Duchess, if he goes on and practises," said Angelica, whose life for the last seven years had been devoted to archery. Major Pountney retired far away into the park, a full quarter of a mile off, and smoked a cigar under a tree. Was it for this that he had absolutely given up a month to drawing out this code of rules, going backwards and forwards two or three times to the printers in his desire to carry out the Duchess's wishes? "Women are so d——d ungrateful!" he said aloud in his solitude, as he turned himself on the hard ground. "And some

men are so d——d lucky!" This fellow, Lopez, had absolutely been allowed to make a good score off his own intractable disobedience.

The Duchess's little joke about the Ministers generally, and the advantages of submission on their part to their chief, was thought by some who heard it not to have been made in good taste. The joke was just such a joke as the Duchess would be sure to make,—meaning very little but still not altogether pointless. It was levelled rather at her husband than at her husband's colleagues who were present, and was so understood by those who really knew her,—as did Mrs. Finn, and Mr. Warburton, the private secretary. But Sir Orlando and Sir Timothy and Mr. Rattler, who were all within hearing, thought that the Duchess had intended to allude to the servile nature of their position; and Mr. Boffin, who heard it, rejoiced within himself, comforting himself with the reflection that his withers were unwrung, and thinking with what pleasure he might carry the anecdote into the farthest corners of the clubs. Poor Duchess! 'T is pitiful to think that after such Herculean labours she should injure the cause by one slight unconsidered word, more, perhaps, than she had advanced it by all her energy.

During this time the Duke was at the Castle, but he showed himself seldom to his guests,—so acting, as the reader will I hope understand, from no sense of the importance of his own personal presence, but influenced by a conviction that a public man should not waste his time. He breakfasted in his own room, because he could thus eat his breakfast in ten minutes. He read all the papers in solitude, because he was thus enabled to give his mind to their contents. Life had always

been too serious to him to be wasted. Every afternoon he walked for the sake of exercise, and would have accepted any companion if any companion had especially offered himself. But he went off by some side-door, finding the side-door to be convenient, and therefore when seen by others was supposed to desire to remain unseen. "I had no idea there was so much pride about the Duke," Mr. Boffin said to his old colleague, Sir Orlando. "Is it pride?" asked Sir Orlando. "It may be shyness," said the wise Boffin. "The two things are so alike you can never tell the difference. But the man who is cursed by either should hardly be a Prime Minister."

It was on the day after this that Sir Orlando thought that the moment had come in which it was his duty to say that salutary word to the Duke, which it was clearly necessary that some colleague should say, and which no colleague could have so good a right to say as he who was the Leader of the House of Commons. He understood clearly that though they were gathered together then at Gatherum Castle for festive purposes, yet that no time was unfit for the discussion of State matters. Does not all the world know that when in autumn the Bismarcks of the world, or they who are bigger than Bismarcks, meet at this or that delicious haunt of salubrity, the affairs of the world are then settled in little conclaves, with greater ease, rapidity, and certainty than in large parliaments or the dull chambers of public offices? Emperor meets emperor, and king meets king, and as they wander among rural glades in fraternal intimacy, wars are arranged, and swelling territories are enjoyed in anticipation. Sir Orlando hitherto had known all this, but had hardly

as yet enjoyed it. He had been long in office, but these sweet confidences can of their very nature belong only to a very few. But now the time had manifestly come.

It was Sunday afternoon, and Sir Orlando caught the Duke in the very act of leaving the house for his walk. There was no archery, and many of the inmates of the Castle were asleep. There had been a question as to the propriety of Sabbath archery, in discussing which reference had been made to Laud's book of sports, and the growing idea that the National Gallery should be opened on the Lord's day. But the Duchess would not have the archery. "We are just the people who should n't prejudge the question," said the Duchess. The Duchess with various ladies, with the Pountneys and Gunners, and other obedient male followers, had been to church. None of the Ministers had of course been able to leave the swollen pouches which are always sent out from London on Saturday night, probably,—we cannot but think,—as arranged excuses for such defalcation, and had passed their mornings comfortably dosing over new novels. The Duke, always right in his purpose but generally wrong in his practice, had stayed at home working all the morning, thereby scandalising the strict, and had gone to church alone in the afternoon, thereby offending the social. The church was close to the house, and he had gone back to change his coat and hat, and to get his stick. But as he was stealing out of the little side-gate, Sir Orlando was down upon him. "If your Grace is going for a walk, and will admit of company, I shall be delighted to attend you," said Sir Orlando. The Duke professed himself to be well pleased, and in

truth was pleased. He would be glad to increase his personal intimacy with his colleagues if it might be done pleasantly.

They had gone nearly a mile across the park, watching the stately movements of the herds of deer, and talking of this and that trifle, before Sir Orlando could bring about an opportunity for uttering his word. At last he did it somewhat abruptly. "I think upon the whole we did pretty well last session," he said, standing still under an old oak-tree.

"Pretty well," re-echoed the Duke.

"And I suppose we have not much to be afraid of next session?"

"I am afraid of nothing," said the Duke.

"But——;" then Sir Orlando hesitated. The Duke, however, said not a word to help him on. Sir Orlando thought that the Duke looked more ducal than he had ever seen him look before. Sir Orlando remembered the old Duke, and suddenly found that the uncle and nephew were very like each other. But it does not become the leader of the House of Commons to be afraid of any one. "Don't you think," continued Sir Orlando, "we should try and arrange among ourselves something of a policy? I am not quite sure that a ministry without a distinct course of action before it can long enjoy the confidence of the country. Take the last half-century. There have been various policies, commanding more or less of general assent; free trade——" Here Sir Orlando gave a kindly wave of his hand, showing that on behalf of his companion he was willing to place at the head of the list a policy which had not always commanded his own assent;—"continued reform in Parliament, to which I have,

with my whole heart, given my poor assistance." The Duke remembered how the bathers' clothes were stolen, and that Sir Orlando had been one of the most nimble-fingered of the thieves. "No popery, Irish grievances, the ballot, retrenchment, efficiency of the public service, all have had their time."

"Things to be done offer themselves, I suppose, because they are in themselves desirable; not because it is desirable to have something to do."

"Just so;—no doubt. But still, if you will think of it, no ministry can endure without a policy. During the latter part of the last session it was understood that we had to get ourselves in harness together, and nothing more was expected from us; but I think we should be prepared with a distinct policy for the coming year. I fear that nothing can be done in Ireland."

"Mr. Finn has ideas——"

"Ah, yes;—well, your Grace. Mr. Finn is a very clever young man certainly; but I don't think we can support ourselves by his plan of Irish reform." Sir Orlando had been a little carried away by his own eloquence and the Duke's tameness, and had interrupted the Duke. The Duke again looked ducal, but on this occasion Sir Orlando did not observe his countenance. "For myself, I think, I am in favour of increased armaments. I have been applying my mind to the subject, and I think I see that the people of this country do not object to a slightly rising scale of estimates in that direction. Of course there is the county suffrage——"

"I will think of what you have been saying," said the Duke.

"As to the county suffrage——"

"I will think it over," said the Duke. "You see that oak. That is the largest tree we have here at Gatherum; and I doubt whether there be a larger one in this part of England." The Duke's voice and words were not uncourteous, but there was something in them which hindered Sir Orlando from referring again on that occasion to county suffrages or increased armaments.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DUCHESS'S NEW SWAN.

When the party had been about a week collected at Gatherum Castle Ferdinand Lopez had manifestly become the favourite of the Duchess for the time, and had, at her instance, promised to remain there for some further days. He had hardly spoken to the Duke since he had been in the house,—but then but few of that motley assembly did talk much with the Duke. Gunner and Pountney had gone away,—the captain having declared his dislike of the upstart Portuguese to be so strong that he could not stay in the same house with him any longer, and the major, who was of stronger mind, having resolved that he would put the intruder down. "It is horrible to think what power money has in these days," said the captain. The captain had shaken the dust of Gatherum altogether from his feet, but the major had so arranged that a bed was to be found for him again in October,—for another happy week; but he was not to return till bidden by the Duchess. "You won't forget;—now will you, Duchess?" he said, imploring her to remember him as he took his leave. "I did take a deal of trouble about the code;—did n't I?" "They don't seem to me to care for the code," said the Duchess, "but, nevertheless, I 'll remember."

"Who, in the name of all that 's wonderful, was that

I saw you with in the garden?" the Duchess said to her husband one afternoon.

"It was Lady Rosina De Courcy, I suppose!"

"Heaven and earth!—what a companion for you to choose."

"Why not?—why should n't I talk to Lady Rosina De Courcy?"

"I 'm not jealous a bit, if you mean that. I don't think Lady Rosina will steal your heart from me. But why you should pick her out of all the people here, when there are so many would think their fortunes made if you would only take a turn with them, I cannot imagine."

"But I don't want to make any one's fortune," said the Duke; "and certainly not in that way."

"What could you be saying to her?"

"She was talking about her family. I rather like Lady Rosina. She is living all alone, it seems, and almost in poverty. Perhaps there is nothing so sad in the world as the female scions of a noble but impoverished stock."

"Nothing so dull, certainly."

"People are not dull to me, if they are real. I pity that poor lady. She is proud of her blood and yet not ashamed of her poverty."

"Whatever might come of her blood, she has been all her life willing enough to get rid of her poverty. It is n't above three years since she was trying her best to marry that brewer at Silverbridge. I wish you could give your time a little to some of the other people."

"To go and shoot arrows?"

"No;—I don't want you to shoot arrows. You

might act the part of host without shooting. Can't you walk about with anybody except Lady Rosina De Courcy?"

"I was walking about with Sir Orlando Drought last Sunday, and I very much prefer Lady Rosina."

"There has been no quarrel?" asked the Duchess sharply.

"Oh dear, no."

"Of course he 's an empty-headed idiot. Everybody has always known that. And he 's put above his place in the House. But it would n't do to quarrel with him now."

"I don't think I am a quarrelsome man, Cora. I don't remember at this moment that I have ever quarrelled with anybody to your knowledge. But I may perhaps be permitted to——"

"Snub a man, you mean. Well; I would n't even snub Sir Orlando very much, if I were you; though I can understand that it might be both pleasant and easy."

"I wish you would n't put slang phrases into my mouth, Cora. If I think that a man intrudes upon me, I am of course bound to let him know my opinion."

"Sir Orlando has—intruded!"

"By no means. He is in a position which justifies his saying many things to me which another might not say. But then, again, he is a man whose opinion does not go far with me, and I have not the knack of seeming to agree with a man while I let his words pass idly by me."

"That is quite true, Plantagenet."

"And, therefore, I was uncomfortable with Sir Orlando, while I was able to sympathise with Lady Rosina."

"What do you think of Ferdinand Lopez?" asked the Duchess, with studied abruptness.

"Think of Mr. Lopez! I have n't thought of him at all. Why should I think of him?"

"I want you to think of him. I think he 's a very pleasant fellow, and I 'm sure he 's a rising man."

"You might think the latter, and perhaps feel sure of the former."

"Very well. Then, to oblige you, I 'll think the latter and be sure of the former. I suppose it 's true that Mr. Grey is going on this mission to Persia?" Mr. Grey was the Duke's intimate friend, and was at this time member for the neighbouring borough of Silverbridge.

"I think he will go. I 've no doubt about it. He is to go after Christmas."

"And will give up his seat?"

The Duke did not answer her immediately. It had only just been decided,—decided by his friend himself, —that the seat should be given up when the journey to Persia was undertaken. Mr. Grey, somewhat in opposition to the Duke's advice, had resolved that he could not be in Persia and do his duty in the House of Commons at the same time. But this resolution had only now been made known to the Duke, and he was rather puzzled to know how the Duchess had been able to be so quick upon him. He had, indeed, kept the matter back from the Duchess, feeling that she would have something to say about it, which might possibly be unpleasant, as soon as the tidings should reach her. "Yes," he said, "I think he will give up his seat. That is his purpose, though I think it is unnecessary."

"Let Mr. Lopez have it."

"Mr. Lopez!"

"Yes;—he is a clever man, a rising man, a man that is sure to do well, and who will be of use to you. Just take the trouble to talk to him. It is assistance of that kind that you want. You Ministers go on shuffling the old cards till they are so worn out and dirty that one can hardly tell the pips on them."

"I am one of the dirty old cards myself," said the Duke.

"That 's nonsense, you know. A man who is at the head of affairs as you are can't be included among the pack I am speaking of. What you want is new blood, or new wood, or new metal, or whatever you may choose to call it. Take my advice and try this man. He is n't a pauper. It is n't money that he wants."

"Cora, your geese are all swans."

"That 's not fair. I have never brought to you a goose yet. My swans have been swans. Who was it brought you and your pet swan of all, Mr. Grey, together? I won't name any names, but it is your swans have been geese."

"It is not for me to return a member for Silverbridge." When he said this, she gave him a look which almost upset even his gravity, a look which was almost the same as asking him whether he would not—"tell that to the marines." "You don't quite understand these things, Cora," he continued. "The influence which owners of property may have in boroughs is decreasing every day, and there arises the question whether a conscientious man will any longer use such influence."

"I don't think you 'd like to see a man from Silverbridge opposing you in the House."

"I may have to bear worse even than that."

"Well;—there it is. The man is here and you have the opportunity of knowing him. Of course I have not hinted at the matter to him. If there were any Palliser wanted the borough I would n't say a word. What more patriotic thing can a patron do with his borough than to select a man who is unknown to him, not related to him, a perfect stranger, merely for his worth?"

"But I do not know what may be the worth of Mr. Lopez."

"I will guarantee that," said the Duchess. Whereupon the Duke laughed, and then left her.

The Duchess had spoken with absolute truth when she told her husband that she had not said a word to Mr. Lopez about Silverbridge, but it was not long before she did say a word. On that same day she found herself alone with him in the garden,—or so much alone as to be able to speak with him privately. He had certainly made the best use of his time since he had been at the Castle, having secured the good-will of many of the ladies, and the displeasure of most of the men. "You have never been in Parliament, I think," said the Duchess.

"I have never even tried to get there."

"Perhaps you dislike the idea of that kind of life."

"No, indeed," he said. "So far from it, that I regard it as the highest kind of life there is in England. A seat in Parliament gives a man a status in this country which it has never done elsewhere."

"Then why don't you try it?"

"Because I 've got into another groove. I 've become essentially a City man,—one of those who take up the trade of making money generally."

"And does that content you?"

"No, Duchess;—certainly not. Instead of contenting me it disgusts me. Not but that I like the money,—only it is so insufficient a use of one's life. I suppose I shall try to get into Parliament some day. Seats in Parliament don't grow like blackberries on bushes."

"Pretty nearly," said the Duchess.

"Not in my part of the country. These good things seem to be appointed to fall in the way of some men, and not of others. If there were a general election going on to-morrow, I should not know how to look for a seat."

"They are to be found sometimes even without a general election," said the Duchess.

"Are you alluding to anything now?"

"Well;—yes, I am. But I 'm very discreet, and do not like to do more than allude. I fancy that Mr. Grey, the member for Silverbridge, is going to Persia. Mr. Grey is a member of Parliament. Members of Parliament ought to be in London and not in Persia. It is generally supposed that no man in England is more prone to do what he ought to do than Mr. Grey. Therefore, Mr. Grey will cease to be member for Silverbridge. That 's logic; is n't it?"

"Has your Grace any logic equally strong to prove that I can follow him in the borough?"

"No;—or if I have, the logic that I should use in that matter must for the present be kept to myself." She certainly had a little syllogism in her head as to the Duke ruling the borough, the Duke's wife ruling

the Duke, and therefore the Duke's wife ruling the borough; but she did not think it prudent to utter this on the present occasion. "I think it much better that men in Parliament should be unmarried," said the Duchess.

"But I am going to be married," said he.

"Going to be married, are you?"

"I have no right to say so, because the lady's father has rejected me." Then he told her the whole story, and so told it as to secure her entire sympathy. In telling it he never said that he was a rich man, he never boasted that that search after wealth of which he had spoken had been successful; but he gave her to understand that there was no objection to him at all on the score of money. "You may have heard of the family," he said.

"I have heard of the Whartons of course, and know that there is a baronet,—but I know nothing more of them. He is not a man of large property, I think."

"My Miss Wharton,—the one I would fain call mine,—is the daughter of a London barrister. He, I believe, is rich."

"Then she will be an heiress."

"I suppose so;—but that consideration has had no weight with me. I have always regarded myself as the architect of my own fortune, and have no wish to owe my material comfort to a wife."

"Sheer love!" suggested the Duchess.

"Yes, I think so. It 's very ridiculous, is it not?"

"And why does the rich barrister object?"

"The rich barrister, Duchess, is an out-and-out old tory, who thinks that his daughter ought to marry no one but an English tory. I am not exactly that."

"A man does not hamper his daughter in these days by politics, when she is falling in love."

"There are other cognate reasons. He does not like a foreigner. Now I am an Englishman, but I have a foreign name. He does not think that a name so grandly Saxon as Wharton should be changed to one so meanly Latin as Lopez."

"The lady does not object to the Latinity?"

"I fancy not."

"Or to the bearer of it?"

"Ah;—there I must not boast. But in simple truth there is only the father's ill-will between us."

"With plenty of money on both sides?" asked the Duchess. Lopez shrugged his shoulders. A shrug at such a time may mean anything, but the Duchess took the shrug as signifying that that question was so surely settled as to admit of no difficulty. "Then," said the Duchess, "the old gentleman may as well give way at once. Of course his daughter will be too many for him." In this way the Duchess of Omnium became the fast friend of Ferdinand Lopez.

CHAPTER XXII.

ST. JAMES'S PARK.

Towards the end of September Everett Wharton and Ferdinand Lopez were in town together, and as no one else was in town,—so at least they both professed to say,—they saw a good deal of each other. Lopez, as we know, had spent a portion of the preceding month at Gatherum Castle, and had made good use of his time, but Everett Wharton had been less fortunate. He had been a little cross with his father, and perhaps a little cross with all the Whartons generally, who did not, he thought, make quite enough of him. In the event of "anything happening" to that ne'er-do-well nephew, he himself would be the heir; and he reflected not unfrequently that something very probably might happen to the nephew. He did not often see this particular cousin, but he always heard of him as being drunk, overwhelmed with debt and difficulty, and altogether in that position of life in which it is probable that something will "happen." There was always of course the danger that the young man might marry and have a child;—but in the meantime surely he, Everett Wharton, should have been as much thought of on the banks of the Wye as Arthur Fletcher. He had been asked down to Wharton Hall,—but he had been asked in a way which he had not thought to be flattering and had declined to go. Then there had been a

plan for joining Arthur Fletcher in a certain shooting, but that had failed in consequence of a few words between himself and Arthur respecting Lopez. Arthur had wanted him to say that Lopez was an unpardonable intruder,—but he had taken the part of Lopez, and therefore, when the time came round, he had nothing to do with the shooting. He had stayed in town till the middle of August, and had then started by himself across the continent with some keen intention of studying German politics; but he had found perhaps that German politics do not manifest themselves in the autumn, or that a foreign country cannot be well studied in solitude,—and he had returned.

Late in the summer, just before his father and sister had left town, he had had some words with the old barrister. There had been a few bills to be paid, and Everett's allowance had been insufficient. It often was insufficient, and then ready money for his German tour was absolutely necessary. Mr. Wharton might probably have said less about the money had not his son accompanied his petition by a further allusion to Parliament. "There are some fellows at last really getting themselves together at the Progress, and of course it will be necessary to know who will be ready to come forward at the next general election."

"I think I know one who won't," said the father, "judging from the manner in which he seems at present to manage his own money affairs." There was more severity in this than the old man had intended, for he had often thought within his own bosom whether it would not be well that he should encourage his son to stand for some seat. And the money that he had now been asked to advance had not been very much,—not

more, in truth, than he expected to be called upon to pay in addition to the modest sum which he professed to allow his son. He was a rich man, who was not in truth made unhappy by parting with his money. But there had been, he thought, an impudence in the conjoint attack which it was his duty to punish. Therefore he had given his son very little encouragement.

"Of course, sir, if you tell me that you are not inclined to pay anything beyond the allowance you make me, there is an end of it."

"I rather think that you have just asked me to pay a considerable sum beyond your allowance, and that I have consented." Everett argued the matter no further, but he permitted his mind to entertain an idea that he was ill-used by his father. The time would come when he would probably be heir not only to his father's money, but also to the Wharton title and the Wharton property,—when his position in the county would really be, as he frequently told himself, quite considerable. Was it possible that he should refrain from blaming his father for not allowing him to obtain, early in life, that parliamentary education which would fit him to be an ornament to the House of Commons, and a safeguard to his country in future years?

Now he and Lopez were at the Progress together, and they were almost the only men in the club. Lopez was quite contented with his own present sojourn in London. He had not only been at Gatherum Castle but was going there again. And then he had brilliant hopes before him,—so brilliant that they began, he thought, to assume the shape of certainties. He had corresponded with the Duchess, and he had gathered from her somewhat dubious words that the Duke

would probably accede to her wishes in the matter of Silverbridge. The vacancy had not yet been declared. Mr. Grey was deterred, no doubt by certain high State purposes, from applying for the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, and thereby releasing himself from his seat in Parliament, and enabling himself to perform, with a clear conscience, duties in a distant part of the world which he did not feel to be compatible with that seat. The seekers after seats were, no doubt, already on the track; but the Duchess had thought that as far as the Duke's good word went, it might possibly be given in favour of Mr. Lopez. The happy aspirant had taken this to be almost as good as a promise. There were also certain pecuniary speculations on foot, which could not be kept quite quiet even in September, as to which he did not like to trust entirely to the unaided energy of Mr. Sextus Parker, or to the boasted alliance of Mr. Mills Happerton. Sextus Parker's whole heart and soul were now in the matter, but Mr. Mills Happerton, an undoubted partner in Hunky & Sons, had blown a little coldly on the affair. But in spite of this Ferdinand Lopez was happy. Was it probable that Mr. Wharton should continue his opposition to a marriage which would make his daughter the wife of a member of Parliament and of a special friend of the Duchess of Omnium?

He had said a word about his own prospects in reference to the marriage, but Everett had been at first too full of his own affairs to attend much to a matter which was comparatively so trifling. "Upon my word," he said, "I am beginning to feel angry with the governor, which is a kind of thing I don't like at all."

"I can understand that when he 's angry with you, you should n't like it."

"I don't mind that half so much. He 'll come round. However unjust he may be now, at the moment, he 's the last man in the world to do an injustice in his will. I have thorough confidence in him. But I find myself driven into hostility to him by a conviction that he won't let me take any real step in life, till my life has been half frittered away."

"You 're thinking of Parliament."

"Of course I am. I don't say you ain't an Englishman, but you are not quite enough of an Englishman to understand what Parliament is to us."

"I hope to be,—some of these days," said Lopez.

"Perhaps you may. I won't say but what you may get yourself educated to it when you 've been married a dozen years to an English wife, and have half-a-dozen English children of your own. But, in the meantime, look at my position. I am twenty-eight years old."

"I am four years your senior."

"It does not matter a straw to you," continued Everett. "But a few years are everything with me. I have a right to suppose that I may be able to represent the county,—say in twenty years. I shall probably then be the head of the family and a rich man. Consider what a parliamentary education would be to me! And then it is just the life for which I have laid myself out, and in which I could make myself useful. You don't sympathise with me, but you might understand me."

"I do both. I think of going into the House myself."

"You!"

"Yes; I do."

"You must have changed your ideas very much, then, within the last month or two."

"I have changed my ideas. My one chief object in life is, as you know, to marry your sister; and if I were a member of Parliament I think that some difficulties would be cleared away."

"But there won't be an election for the next three years at any rate," said Everett Wharton, staring at his friend. "You don't mean to keep Emily waiting for a dissolution?"

"There are occasional vacancies," said Lopez.

"Is there a chance of anything of that kind falling in your way?"

"I think there is. I can't quite tell you all the particulars because other people are concerned, but I don't think it improbable that I may be in the House before——; well, say in three months' time."

"In three months' time!" exclaimed Everett, whose mouth was watering at the prospects of his friend. "That is what comes from going to stay with the Prime Minister, I suppose." Lopez shrugged his shoulders. "Upon my word, I can't understand you," continued the other. "It was only the other day you were arguing in this very room as to the absurdity of a parliamentary career,—pitching into me, by George, like the very mischief, because I had said something in its favour,—and now you are going in for it yourself in some sort of mysterious way that a fellow can't understand." It was quite clear that Everett Wharton thought himself ill-used by his friend's success.

"There is no mystery;—only I can't tell people's names."

"What is the borough?"

"I cannot tell you that at present."

"Are you sure there will be a vacancy?"

"I think I am sure."

"And that you will be invited to stand?"

"I am not sure of that."

"Of course anybody can stand whether invited or not."

"If I come forward for this place I shall do so on the very best interest. Don't mention it. I tell you because I already regard my connection with you as being so close as to call upon me to tell you anything of that kind."

"And yet you do not tell me the details."

"I tell you all that I can in honour tell."

Everett Wharton certainly felt aggrieved by his friend's news, and plainly showed that he did so. It was so hard that if a stray seat in Parliament were going a-begging, it should be thrown in the way of this man who did n't care for it, and could n't use it to any good purpose, instead of in his own way! Why should any one want Ferdinand Lopez to be in Parliament? Ferdinand Lopez had paid no attention to the great political questions of the Commonwealth. He knew nothing of Labour and Capital, of Unions, Strikes, and Lock-outs. But because he was rich, and, by being rich, had made his way among great people, he was to have a seat in Parliament! As for the wealth, it might be at his own command also,—if only his father could be got to see the matter in a proper light. And as for the friendship of great people,—Prime Ministers, Duchesses, and such like,—Everett Wharton was quite confident that he was at any rate as well qualified to shine among them as Fer-

dinand Lopez. He was of too good a nature to be stirred to injustice against his friend by the soreness of this feeling. He did not wish to rob his friend of his wealth, of his Duchesses, or of his embryo seat in Parliament. But for the moment there came upon him a doubt whether Ferdinand was so very clever, or so peculiarly gentlemanlike, or in any way very remarkable, and almost a conviction that he was very far from being good-looking.

They dined together, and quite late in the evening they strolled out into St. James's Park. There was nobody in London, and there was nothing for either of them to do, and therefore they agreed to walk round the park, dark and gloomy as they knew the park would be. Lopez had seen and had quite understood the bitterness of spirit by which Everett had been oppressed, and with that peculiarly imperturbable good humour which made a part of his character bore it all, even with tenderness. He was a man, as are many of his race, who could bear contradictions, unjust suspicions, and social ill-treatment without a shadow of resentment, but who, if he had a purpose, could carry it out without a shadow of a scruple. Everett Wharton had on this occasion made himself very unpleasant, and Lopez had borne with him as an angel would hardly have done; but should Wharton ever stand in his friend's way, his friend would sacrifice him without compunction. As it was Lopez bore with him, simply noting in his own mind that Everett Wharton was a greater ass than he had taken him to be. It was Wharton's idea that they should walk round the park, and Lopez for a time had discouraged the suggestion.

"It is a wretchedly dark place at night, and you don't know whom you may meet there."

"You don't mean to say that you are afraid to walk round St. James's Park with me, because it 's dark!" said Wharton.

"I certainly should be afraid by myself, but I don't know that I am afraid with you. But what 's the good?"

"It 's better than sitting here doing nothing, without a soul to speak to. I 've already smoked half-a-dozen cigars, till I 'm so muddled I don't know what I 'm about. It 's so hot one can't walk in the day, and this is just the time for exercise." Lopez yielded, being willing to yield in almost anything at present to the brother of Emily Wharton; and, though the thing seemed to him to be very foolish, they entered the park by St. James's Palace, and started to walk round it, turning to the right and going in front of Buckingham Palace. As they went on Wharton still continued his accusation against his father and said also some sharp things against Lopez himself, till his companion began to think that the wine he had drunk had been as bad as the cigars. "I can't understand your wanting to go into Parliament," he said. "What do you know about it?"

"If I get there I can learn like anybody else, I suppose."

"Half of those who go there don't learn. They are, as it were, born to it, and they do very well to support this party or that."

"And why should n't I support this party,—or that?"

"I don't suppose you know which party you would support,—except that you 'd vote for the Duke, if, as I suppose, you are to get in under the Duke's influence. If I went into the House I should go with a fixed and settled purpose of my own."

"I 'm not there yet," said Lopez, willing to drop the subject.

"It will be a great expense to you, and will stand altogether in the way of your profession. As far as Emily is concerned, I should think my father would be dead against it."

"Then he would be unreasonable."

"Not at all, if he thought you would injure your professional prospects. It is a d——d piece of folly; that 's the long and the short of it."

This certainly was very uncivil, and it almost made Lopez angry. But he had made up his mind that his friend was a little the worse for the wine he had drunk, and therefore he did not resent even this. "Never mind politics and Parliament now," he said, "but let us get home. I am beginning to be sick of this. It 's so awfully dark, and whenever I do hear a step, I think somebody is coming to rob us. Let us get on a bit."

"What the deuce are you afraid of?" said Everett. They had then come up the greater part of the length of the Bird-Cage Walk, and the lights at Storey's Gate were just visible, but the road on which they were then walking was very dark. The trees were black over their head, and not a step was heard near them. At this time it was just midnight. Now, certainly, among the faults which might be justly attributed to Lopez, personal cowardice could not be reckoned. On this evening he had twice spoken of being afraid, but the

fear had simply been that which ordinary caution indicates; and his object had been that of hindering Wharton in the first place from coming into the park, and then of getting him out of it as quickly as possible.

"Come along," said Lopez.

"By George, you are in a blue funk," said the other. "I can hear your teeth chattering." Lopez, who was beginning to be angry, walked on and said nothing. It was too absurd, he thought, for real anger, but he kept a little in front of Wharton, intending to show that he was displeased. "You had better run away at once," said Wharton.

"Upon my word, I shall begin to think that you 're tipsy," said Lopez.

"Tipsy!" said the other. "How dare you say such a thing to me? You never in your life saw me in the least altered by anything I had drunk."

Lopez knew that at any rate this was untrue. "I 've seen you as drunk as Cloe before now," said he.

"That 's a lie," said Everett Wharton.

"Come, Wharton," said the other, "do not disgrace yourself by conduct such as that. Something has put you out, and you do not know what you are saying. I can hardly imagine that you should wish to insult me."

"It was you who insulted me. You said I was drunk. When you said it you knew it was untrue."

Lopez walked on a little way in silence, thinking over this most absurd quarrel. Then he turned round and spoke. "This is all the greatest nonsense I ever heard in the world. I 'll go on and go to bed, and to-morrow morning you 'll think better of it. But pray remember that under no circumstances should you call

a man a liar, unless on cool consideration you are determined to quarrel with him for lying, and determined also to see the quarrel out."

"I am quite ready to see this quarrel out."

"Good night," said Lopez, starting off at a quick pace. They were then close to the turn in the park, and Lopez went on till he had nearly reached the park front of the new offices. As he had walked he had listened to the footfall of his friend, and after a while had perceived, or had thought that he perceived, that the sound was discontinued. It seemed to him that Wharton had altogether lost his senses;—the insult to himself had been so determined and so absolutely groundless! He had striven his best to conquer the man's ill-humour by good-natured forbearance, and had only suggested that Wharton was perhaps tipsy in order to give him some excuse. But if his companion were really drunk, as he now began to think, could it be right to leave him unprotected in the park? The man's manner had been strange the whole evening, but there had been no sign of the effect of wine till after they had left the club. But Lopez had heard of men who had been apparently sober, becoming drunk as soon as they got out into the air. It might have been so in this case, though Wharton's voice and gait had not been those of a drunken man. At any rate, he would turn back and look after him; and as he did turn back, he resolved that whatever Wharton might say to him on this night he would not notice. He was too wise to raise a further impediment to his marriage by quarrelling with Emily's brother.

As soon as he paused he was sure that he heard footsteps behind him which were not those of Everett

"He ran back to the spot at which he had left his friend,"

"He ran back to the spot where he had left his friend."

Wharton. Indeed, he was sure that he heard the footsteps of more than one person. He stood still for a moment to listen, and then he distinctly heard a rush and a scuffle. He ran back to the spot at which he had left his friend, and at first thought that he perceived a mob of people in the dusk. But as he got nearer, he saw that there were a man and two women. Wharton was on the ground, on his back, and the man was apparently kneeling on his neck and head while the women were rifling his pockets. Lopez, hardly knowing how he was acting, was upon them in a moment, flying in the first place at the man, who had jumped up to meet him as he came. He received at once a heavy blow on his head from some weapon, which, however, his hat so far stopped as to save him from being felled or stunned, and then he felt another blow from behind on the ear, which he afterwards conceived to have been given him by one of the women. But before he could well look about him, or well know how the whole thing had happened, the man and the two women had taken to their legs, and Wharton was standing on his feet leaning against the iron railings.

The whole thing had occupied a very short space of time, and yet the effects were very grave. At the first moment Lopez looked round and endeavoured to listen, hoping that some assistance might be near,—some policeman, or, if not that, some wanderer by night who might be honest enough to help him. But he could hear or see no one. In this condition of things it was not possible for him to pursue the ruffians, as he could not leave his friend leaning against the park-rails. It was at once manifest to him that Wharton had been much hurt, or at any rate incapacitated for immediate

exertion, by the blows he had received;—and as he put his hand up to his own head, from which in the scuffle his hat had fallen, he was not certain that he was not severely hurt himself. Lopez could see that Wharton was very pale, that his cravat had been almost wrenched from his neck by pressure, that his waistcoat was torn open and the front of his shirt soiled,—and he could see also that a fragment of the watch-chain was hanging loose, showing that the watch was gone. "Are you hurt much?" he said, coming close up and taking a tender hold of his friend's arm. Wharton smiled and shook his head, but spoke not a word. He was in truth more shaken, stunned, and bewildered than actually injured. The ruffian's fist had been at his throat, twisting his cravat, and for half a minute he had felt that he was choked. As he had struggled while one woman pulled at his watch and the other searched for his purse,—struggling, alas! unsuccessfully,—the man had endeavoured to quiet him by kneeling on his chest, strangling him with his own necktie, and pressing hard on his gullet. It is a treatment which, after a few seconds of vigorous practice, is apt to leave the patient for a while disconcerted and unwilling to speak. "Say a word if you can," whispered Lopez, looking into the other man's face with anxious eyes.

At the moment there came across Wharton's mind a remembrance that he had behaved very badly to his friend, and some sort of vague misty doubt whether all this evil had not befallen him because of his misconduct. But he knew at the same time that Lopez was not responsible for the evil, and dismayed as he had been, still he recalled enough of the nature of the

struggle in which he had been engaged, to be aware that Lopez had befriended him gallantly. He could not even yet speak; but he saw the blood trickling down his friend's temple and forehead, and lifting up his hand, touched the spot with his fingers. Lopez also put his hand up, and drew it away covered with blood. "Oh," said he, "that does not signify in the least. I got a knock, I know, and I am afraid I have lost my hat, but I 'm not hurt."

"Oh dear!" The word was uttered with a low sigh. Then there was a pause, during which Lopez supported the sufferer. "I thought that it was all over with me at one moment."

"You will be better now."

"Oh yes. My watch is gone!"

"I fear it is," said Lopez.

"And my purse," said Wharton, collecting his strength together sufficiently to search for his treasures. "I had eight £5 notes in it."

"Never mind your money or your watch if your bones are not broken."

"It 's a bore, all the same, to lose every shilling that one has." Then they walked very slowly away towards the steps at the Duke of York's column, Wharton regaining his strength as he went, but still able to progress but leisurely. Lopez had not found his hat, and, being covered with blood, was, as far as appearances went, in a worse plight than the other. At the foot of the steps they met a policeman, to whom they told their story, and who, as a matter of course, was filled with an immediate desire to arrest them both. To the policeman's mind it was most distressing that a bloody-faced man without a hat, with a companion almost too

weak to walk, should not be conveyed to a police-station. But after ten minutes' parley, during which Wharton sat on the bottom step and Lopez explained all the circumstances, he consented to get them a cab, to take their address, and then to go alone to the station and make his report. That the thieves had got off with their plunder was only too manifest. Lopez took the injured man home to the house in Manchester Square, and then returned in the same cab, hatless, to his own lodgings.

As he returned he applied his mind to think how he could turn the events of the evening to his own use. He did not believe that Everett Wharton was severely hurt. Indeed, there might be a question whether in the morning his own injury would not be the most severe. But the immediate effect on the flustered and despoiled unfortunate one had been great enough to justify Lopez in taking strong steps if strong steps could in any way benefit himself. Would it be best to publish this affair on the house-tops, or to bury it in the shade, as nearly as it might be buried? He had determined in his own mind that his friend certainly had been tipsy. In no other way could his conduct be understood. And a row with a tipsy man at midnight in the park is not, at first sight, creditable. But it could be made to have a better appearance if told by himself, than if published from other quarters. The old housekeeper at Manchester Square must know something about it, and would, of course, tell what she knew, and the loss of the money and the watch must in all probability be made known. Before he had reached his own door, he had quite made up his mind that he himself would tell the story after his own fashion.

And he told it, before he went to bed that night. He washed the blood from his face and head, and cut away a part of the clotted hair, and then wrote a letter to old Mr. Wharton at Wharton Hall. And between three and four o'clock in the morning he went out and posted his letter in the nearest pillar, so that it might go down by the day mail and certainly be preceded by no other written tidings. The letter which he sent was as follows:—

"Dear Mr. Wharton,—I regret to have to send you an account of a rather serious accident which has happened to Everett. I am now writing at 3 A.M., having just taken him home, and it occurred at about midnight. You may be quite sure that there is no danger or I should have advertised you by telegram.

"There is nothing doing in town, and therefore, as the night was fine, we, very foolishly, agreed to walk round St. James's Park late after dinner. It is a kind of thing that nobody does;—but we did it. When we had nearly got round I was in a hurry, whereas Everett was for strolling slowly, and so I went on before him. But I was hardly two hundred yards in front of him before he was attacked by three persons, a man and two women. The man I presume came upon him from behind, but he has not sufficiently collected his thoughts to remember exactly what occurred. I heard the scuffle and of course turned back,—and was luckily in time to get up before he was seriously hurt. I think the man would otherwise have strangled him. I am sorry to say that he lost both his watch and purse.

"He undoubtedly has been very much shaken, and altogether 'knocked out of time,' as people say. Ex-

cuse the phrase, because I think it will best explain what I want you to understand. The man's hand at his throat must have stopped his breathing for some seconds. He certainly has received no permanent injury, but I should not wonder if he should be unwell for some days. I tell you all exactly as it occurred, as it strikes me that you may like to run up to town for a day just to look at him. But you need not do so on the score of any danger. Of course he will see a doctor to-morrow. There did not seem to be any necessity for calling one up to-night. We did give notice to the police as we were coming home, but I fear the ruffians had ample time for escape. He was too weak, and I was too fully employed with him, to think of pursuing them at the time.

"Of course he is at Manchester Square.

"Most faithfully yours,

"FERDINAND LOPEZ."

He did not say a word about Emily, but he knew that Emily would see the letter and would perceive that he had been the means of preserving her brother; and, in regard to the old barrister himself, Lopez thought that the old man could not but feel grateful for his conduct. He had in truth behaved very well to Everett. He had received a heavy blow on the head in young Wharton's defence,—of which he was determined to make good use, though he had thought it expedient to say nothing about the blow in his letter. Surely it would all help. Surely the paternal mind would be softened towards him when the father should be made to understand how great had been his service to the son. That Everett would make little of

what had been done for him he did not in the least fear. Everett Wharton was sometimes silly but was never ungenerous.

In spite of his night's work Lopez was in Manchester Square before nine on the following morning, and on the side of his brow he bore a great patch of black plaster. "My head is very thick," he said, laughing, when Everett asked after his wound. "But it would have gone badly with me if the ruffian had struck an inch lower. I suppose my hat saved me, though I remember very little. Yes, old fellow, I have written to your father, and I think he will come up. It was better that it should be so."

"There is nothing the matter with me," said Everett.

"One did n't quite know last night whether there was or no. At any rate his coming won't hurt you. It 's always well to have your banker near you, when your funds are low."

Then after a pause Everett made his apology,—"I know I made a great ass of myself last night."

"Don't think about it."

"I used a word I should n't have used, and I beg your pardon."

"Not another word, Everett. Between you and me things can't go wrong. We love each other too well."

CHAPTER XXIII.

SURRENDER.

THE letter given in the previous chapter was received at Wharton Hall late in the evening of the day on which it was written, and was discussed among all the Whartons that night. Of course there was no doubt as to the father's going up to town on the morrow. The letter was just such a letter as would surely make a man run to his son's bedside. Had the son written himself it would have been different; but the fact that the letter had come from another man seemed to be evidence that the poor sufferer could not write. Perhaps the urgency with which Lopez had sent off his despatch, getting his account of the fray ready for the very early day mail, though the fray had not taken place till midnight, did not impress them sufficiently when they accepted this as evidence of Everett's dangerous condition. At this conference at Wharton very little was said about Lopez, but there was a general feeling that he had behaved well. "It was very odd that they should have parted in the park," said Sir Alured. "But very lucky that they should not have parted sooner," said John Fletcher. If a grain of suspicion against Lopez might have been set afloat in their minds by Sir Alured's suggestion, it was altogether dissipated by John Fletcher's reply;—for everybody there knew that John Fletcher carried common sense for the two families. Of course they all hated Ferdi-

nand Lopez, but nothing could be extracted from the incident, as far as its details were yet known to them, which could be turned to his injury.

While they sat together discussing the matter in the drawing-room Emily Wharton hardly said a word. She uttered a little shriek when the account of the affair was first read to her, and then listened with silent attention to what was said around her. When there had seemed for a moment to be a doubt,—or rather a question, for there had been no doubt,—whether her father should go at once to London, she had spoken just a word. "Of course you will go, papa." After that she said nothing till she came to him in his own room. "Of course I will go with you to-morrow, papa."

"I don't think that will be necessary."

"Oh yes. Think how wretched I should be."

"I would telegraph to you immediately."

"And I should n't believe the telegraph. Don't you know how it always is? Besides, we have been more than the usual time. We were to go to town in ten days, and you would not think of returning to fetch me. Of course I will go with you. I have already begun to pack my things, and Jane is now at it." Her father, not knowing how to oppose her, yielded, and Emily before she went to bed had made the ladies of the house aware that she also intended to start the next morning at eight o'clock.

During the first part of the journey very little was said between Mr. Wharton and Emily. There were other persons in the carriage, and she, though she had determined in some vague way that she would speak some words to her father before she reached their

own house, had still wanted time to resolve what those words should be. But before she had reached Gloucester she had made up her mind, and going on from Gloucester she found herself for a time alone with her father. She was sitting opposite to him, and after conversing for a while she touched his knee with her hand. "Papa," she said, "I suppose I must now have to meet Mr. Lopez in Manchester Square?"

"Why should you have to meet Mr. Lopez in Manchester Square?"

"Of course he will come there to see Everett. After what has occurred you can hardly forbid him the house. He has saved Everett's life."

"I don't know that he has done anything of the kind," said Mr. Wharton, who was vacillating between different opinions. He did in his heart believe that the Portuguese whom he so hated had saved his son from the thieves, and he also had almost come to the conviction that he must give his daughter to the man, —but at the same time he could not as yet bring himself to abandon his opposition to the marriage.

"Perhaps you think the story is not true."

"I don't doubt the story in the least. Of course one man sticks to another in such an affair, and I have no doubt that Mr. Lopez behaved as any English gentleman would."

"Any English gentleman, papa, would have to come afterwards and see the friend he had saved. Don't you think so?"

"Oh yes;—he might call."

"And Mr. Lopez will have an additional reason for calling,—and I know he will come. Don't you think he will come?"

"I don't want to think anything about it," said the father.

"But I want you to think about it, papa. Papa, I know you are not indifferent to my happiness."

"I hope you know it."

"I do know it. I am quite sure of it. And therefore I don't think you ought to be afraid to talk to me about what must concern my happiness so greatly. As far as my own self and my own will are concerned I consider myself given away to Mr. Lopez already. Nothing but his marrying some other woman,—or his death,—would make me think of myself otherwise than as belonging to him. I am not a bit ashamed of owning my love—to you; nor to him, if the opportunity were allowed me. I don't think there should be concealment about anything so important between people who are dear to each other. I have told you that I will do whatever you bid me about him. If you say that I shall not speak to him or see him, I will not speak to him or see him—willingly. You certainly need not be afraid that I should marry him without your leave."

"I am not in the least afraid of it."

"But I think you should think over what you are doing. And I am quite sure of this,—that you must tell me what I am to do in regard to receiving Mr. Lopez in Manchester Square." Mr. Wharton listened attentively to what his daughter said to him, shaking his head from time to time as though almost equally distracted by her passive obedience and by her passionate protestations of love; but he said nothing. When she had completed her supplication he threw himself back in his seat and after a while took his book. It may be

doubted whether he read much, for the question as to his girl's happiness was quite as near his heart as she could wish it to be.

It was late in the afternoon before they reached Manchester Square, and they were both happy to find that they were not troubled by Mr. Lopez at the first moment. Everett was at home and in bed, and had not indeed as yet recovered the effect of the man's knuckles at his windpipe; but he was well enough to assure his father and sister that they need not have disturbed themselves or hurried their return from Herefordshire on his account. "To tell the truth," said he, "Ferdinand Lopez was hurt worse than I was."

"He said nothing of being hurt himself," said Mr. Wharton.

"How was he hurt?" asked Emily, in the quietest, stillest voice.

"The fact is," said Everett, beginning to tell the whole story after his own fashion, "if he had n't been at hand then, there would have been an end of me. We had separated, you know——"

"What could make two men separate from each other in the darkness of St. James's Park?"

"Well,—to tell the truth we had quarrelled. I had made an ass of myself. You need not go into that any further, except that you should know that it was all my fault. Of course it was n't a real quarrel,"—when he said this Emily, who was sitting close to his bed-head, pressed his arm under the clothes with her hand,—"but I had said something rough, and he had gone on just to put an end to it."

"It was uncommonly foolish," said old Wharton.

"It was very foolish going round the park at all at that time of night."

"No doubt, sir;—but it was my doing. And if he had not gone with me, I should have gone alone." Here there was another pressure. "I was a little low in spirits, and wanted the walk."

"But how is he hurt?" asked the father.

"The man who was kneeling on me and squeezing the life out of me jumped up when he heard Lopez coming, and struck him over the head with a bludgeon. I heard the blow, though I was pretty well done for at the time myself. I don't think they hit me, but they got something round my neck, and I was half strangled before I knew what they were doing. Poor Lopez bled horribly, but he says he is none the worse for it." Here there was another little pressure under the bed-clothes; for Emily felt that her brother was pleading for her in every word that he said.

About ten on the following morning Lopez came and asked for Mr. Wharton. He was shown into the study, where he found the old man, and at once began to give his account of the whole concern in an easy, unconcerned manner. He had the large black patch on the side of his head, which had been so put on as almost to become him. But it was so conspicuous as to force a question respecting it from Mr. Wharton. "I am afraid you got rather a sharp knock yourself, Mr. Lopez?"

"I did get a knock, certainly;—but the odd part of it is that I knew nothing about it till I found the blood in my eyes after they had decamped. But I lost my hat, and there is a rather long cut just above the temple.

It has n't done me the slightest harm. The worst of it was that they got off with Everett's watch and money."

"Had he much money?"

"Forty pounds!" And Lopez shook his head, thereby signifying that forty pounds at the present moment was more than Everett Wharton could afford to lose. Upon the whole he carried himself very well, ingratiating himself with the father, raising no question about the daughter, and saying as little as possible of himself. He asked whether he could go up and see his friend, and of course was allowed to do so. A minute before he entered the room Emily left it. They did not see each other. At any rate he did not see her. But there was a feeling with both of them that the other was close,—and there was something present to them, almost amounting to conviction, that the accident of the park robbery would be good for them.

"He certainly did save Everett's life," Emily said to her father the next day.

"Whether he did or not, he did his best," said Mr. Wharton.

"When one's dearest relation is concerned," said Emily, "and when his life had been saved, one feels that one has to be grateful even if it has been an accident. I hope he knows, at any rate, that I am grateful."

The old man had not been a week in London before he knew that he had absolutely lost the game. Mrs. Roby came back to her house round the corner, ostensibly with the object of assisting her relatives in nursing Everett,—a purpose for which she certainly was not needed; but, as the matter progressed, Mr. Wharton was not without suspicion that her return had been arranged by Ferdinand Lopez. She took upon

herself, at any rate, to be loud in the praise of the man who had saved the life of her "darling nephew,"—and to see that others also should be loud in his praise. In a little time all London had heard of the affair, and it had been discussed out of London. Down at Gatherum Castle the matter had been known, or partly known,—but the telling of it had always been to the great honour and glory of the hero. Major Pountney had almost broken his heart over it, and Captain Gunner, writing to his friend from the Curragh, had asserted his knowledge that it was all a "got-up thing" between the two men. The Breakfast Table and the Evening Pulpit had been loud in praise of Lopez; but the People's Banner, under the management of Mr. Quintus Slide, had naturally thrown much suspicion on the incident when it became known to the Editor that Ferdinand Lopez had been entertained by the Duke and Duchess of Omnium. "We have always felt some slight doubts as to the details of the affair said to have happened about a fortnight ago, just at midnight, in St. James's Park. We should be glad to know whether the policemen have succeeded in tracing any of the stolen property, or whether any real attempt to trace it has been made." This was one of the paragraphs, and it was hinted still more plainly afterwards that Everett Wharton, being short of money, had arranged the plan with the view of opening his father's purse. But the general effect was certainly serviceable to Lopez. Emily Wharton did believe him to be a hero. Everett was beyond measure grateful to him,—not only for having saved him from the thieves, but also for having told nothing of his previous folly. Mrs. Roby always alluded to the matter as if, for

all coming ages, every Wharton ought to acknowledge that gratitude to a Lopez was the very first duty of life. The old man felt the absurdity of much of this, but still it affected him. When Lopez came he could not be rough to the man who had done a service to his son. And then he found himself compelled to do something. He must either take his daughter away, or he must yield. But his power of taking his daughter away seemed to be less than it had been. There was an air of quiet, unmerited suffering about her, which quelled him. And so he yielded.

It was after this fashion. Whether affected by the violence of the attack made on him, or from other cause, Everett had been unwell after the affair, and had kept his room for a fortnight. During this time Lopez came to see him daily, and daily Emily Wharton had to take herself out of the man's way, and hide herself from the man's sight. This she did with much tact and with lady-like quietness, but not without an air of martyrdom, which cut her father to the quick. "My dear," he said to her one evening, as she was preparing to leave the drawing-room on hearing his knock, "stop and see him if you like it."

"Papa!"

"I don't want to make you wretched. If I could have died first, and got out of the way, perhaps it would have been better."

"Papa, you will kill me if you speak in that way! If there is anything to say to him, do you say it." And then she escaped.

Well! It was an added bitterness, but no doubt it was his duty. If he did intend to consent to the marriage, it certainly was for him to signify that consent

to the man. It would not be sufficient that he should get out of the way and leave his girl to act for herself as though she had no friend in the world. The surrender which he had made to his daughter had come from a sudden impulse at the moment, but it could not now be withdrawn. So he stood out on the staircase, and when Lopez came up on his way to Everett's bedroom, he took him by the arm and led him into the drawing-room. "Mr. Lopez," he said, "you know that I have not been willing to welcome you into my house as a son-in-law. There are reasons on my mind, —perhaps prejudices,—which are strong against it. They are as strong now as ever. But she wishes it, and I have the utmost reliance on her constancy."

"So have I," said Lopez.

"Stop a moment, if you please, sir. In such a position a father's thought is only as to his daughter's happiness and prosperity. It is not his own that he should consider. I hear you well spoken of in the outer world, and I do not know that I have a right to demand of my daughter that she should tear you from her affections, because—because you are not just such as I would have her husband to be. You have my permission to see her." Then before Lopez could say a word, he left the room, and took his hat and hurried away to his club.

As he went he was aware that he had made no terms at all;—but then he was inclined to think that no terms should be made. There seemed to be a general understanding that Lopez was doing well in the world,—in a profession of the working of which Mr. Wharton himself knew absolutely nothing. He had a large fortune at his own bestowal,—intended for his

daughter,—which would have been forthcoming at the moment and paid down on the nail, had she married Arthur Fletcher. The very way in which the money should be invested and tied up and made to be safe and comfortable to the Fletcher-cum-Wharton interests generally, had been fully settled among them. But now this other man, this stranger, this Portuguese, had entered in upon the inheritance. But the stranger, the Portuguese, must wait. Mr. Wharton knew himself to be an old man. She was his child, and he would not wrong her. But she should have her money closely settled upon herself on his death,—and on her children, should she then have any. It should be done by his will. He would say nothing about money to Lopez, and if Lopez should, as was probable, ask after his daughter's fortune, he would answer to this effect. Thus he almost resolved that he would give his daughter to the man without any inquiry as to the man's means. The thing had to be done, and he would take no further trouble about it. The comfort of his life was gone. His home would no longer be a home to him. His daughter could not now be his companion. The sooner that death came to him the better, but till death should come he must console himself as well as he could by playing whist at the Eldon. It was after this fashion that Mr. Wharton thought of the coming marriage between his daughter and her lover.

"I have your father's consent to marry your sister," said Ferdinand immediately on entering Everett's room.

"I knew it must come soon," said the invalid.

"I cannot say that it has been given in the most gracious manner,—but it has been given very clearly.

I have his express permission to see her. Those were his last words."

Then there was a sending of notes between the sick-room and the sick man's sister's room. Everett wrote and Ferdinand wrote, and Emily wrote,—short lines each of them,—a few words scrawled. The last from Emily was as follows:—"Let him go into the drawing-room. E. W." And so Ferdinand went down, to meet his love,—to encounter her for the first time as her recognised future husband and engaged lover. Passionate, declared, and thorough as was her love for this man, the familiar intercourse between them had hitherto been very limited. There had been little,—we may perhaps say none,—of that dalliance between them which is so delightful to the man and so wondrous to the girl till custom has staled the edge of it. He had never sat with his arm round her waist. He had rarely held even her hand in his for a happy recognised pause of a few seconds. He had never kissed even her brow. And there she was now, standing before him, all his own, absolutely given to him, with the fullest assurance of love on her part, and with the declared consent of her father. Even he had been a little confused as he opened the door,—even he, as he paused to close it behind him, had had to think how he would address her, and perhaps had thought in vain. But he had not a moment for any thought after entering the room. Whether it was his doing or hers he hardly knew; but she was in his arms, and her lips were pressed to his, and his arm was tight round her waist, holding her close to his breast. It seemed as though all that was wanting had been understood in a moment, and as though they had lived together and

loved for the last twelve months with the fullest mutual confidence. And she was the first to speak:—

"Ferdinand, I am so happy! Are you happy?"

"My love; my darling!"

"You have never doubted me, I know,—since you first knew it."

"Doubted you, my girl!"

"That I would be firm! And now papa has been good to me, and how quickly one's sorrow is over. I am yours, my love, for ever and ever. You knew it before, but I like to tell you. I will be true to you in everything! Oh, my love!"

He had but little to say to her, but we know that for "lovers lacking matter, the cleanliest shift is to kiss." In such moments silence charms, and almost any words are unsuitable except those soft, bird-like murmurings of love which, sweet as they are to the ear, can hardly be so written as to be sweet to the reader.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MARRIAGE.

The engagement was made in October, and the marriage took place in the latter part of November. When Lopez pressed for an early day,—which he did very strongly,—Emily raised no difficulties in the way of his wishes. The father, foolishly enough, would at first have postponed it, and made himself so unpleasant to Lopez by his manner of doing this, that the bride was driven to take her lover's part. As the thing was to be done, what was to be gained by delay? It could not be made a joy to him; nor, looking at the matter as he looked at it, could he make a joy even of her presence during the few intervening weeks. Lopez proposed to take his bride into Italy for the winter months, and to stay there at any rate through December and January, alleging that he must be back in town by the beginning of February;—and this was taken as a fair plea for hastening the marriage.

When the matter was settled, he went back to Gatherum Castle, as he had arranged to do with the Duchess, and managed to interest her Grace in all his proceedings. She promised that she would call on his bride in town, and even went so far as to send her a costly wedding present. "You are sure she has got money?" said the Duchess.

"I am not sure of anything," said Lopez,—"except

this, that I do not mean to ask a single question about it. If he says nothing to me about money, I certainly shall say nothing to him. My feeling is this, Duchess; I am not marrying Miss Wharton for her money. The money, if there be any, has had nothing to do with it. But of course it will be a pleasure added if it be there." The Duchess complimented him, and told him that this was exactly as it should be.

But there was some delay as to the seat for Silverbridge. Mr. Grey's departure for Persia had been postponed,—the Duchess thought only for a month or six weeks. The Duke, however, was of opinion that Mr. Grey should not vacate his seat till the day of his going was at any rate fixed. The Duke, moreover, had not made any promise of supporting his wife's favourite. "Don't set your heart upon it too much, Mr. Lopez," the Duchess had said; "but you may be sure I will not forget you." Then it had been settled between them that the marriage should not be postponed, or the proposed trip to Italy abandoned, because of the probable vacancy at Silverbridge. Should the vacancy occur during his absence, and should the Duke consent, he could return at once. All this occurred in the last week or two before his marriage.

There were various little incidents which did not tend to make the happiness of Emily Wharton complete. She wrote to her cousin Mary Wharton, and also to Lady Wharton;—and her father wrote to Sir Alured; but the folk at Wharton Hall did not give in their adherence. Old Mrs. Fletcher was still there, but John Fletcher had gone home to Longbarns. The obduracy of the Whartons might probably be owing to these two accidents. Mrs. Fletcher declared aloud,

as soon as the tidings reached her, that she never wished to see or hear anything more of Emily Wharton. "She must be a girl," said Mrs. Fletcher, "of an ingrained vulgar taste." Sir Alured, whose letter from Mr. Wharton had been very short, replied as shortly to his cousin. "Dear Abel,—We all hope that Emily will be happy, though of course we regret the marriage." The father, though he had not himself written triumphantly, or even hopefully,—as fathers are wont to write when their daughters are given away in marriage, —was wounded by the curtness and unkindness of the baronet's reply, and at the moment declared to himself that he would never go to Herefordshire any more. But on the following day there came a worse blow than Sir Alured's single line. Emily, not in the least doubting but that her request would be received with the usual ready assent, had asked Mary Wharton to be one of her bridesmaids. It must be supposed that the answer to this was written, if not under the dictation, at any rate under the inspiration, of Mrs. Fletcher. It was as follows:—

"Dear Emily,—Of course we all wish you to be very happy in your marriage, but equally of course we are all disappointed. We had taught ourselves to think that you would have bound yourself closer with us down here, instead of separating yourself entirely from us.

"Under all the circumstances mamma thinks it would not be wise for me to go up to London as one of your bridesmaids.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"Mary Wharton."

This letter made poor Emily very angry for a day or two. "It is as unreasonable as it is ill-natured," she said to her brother.

"What else could you expect from a stiffnecked, prejudiced set of provincial ignoramuses?"

"What Mary says is not true. She did not think that I was going to bind myself closer with them, as she calls it. I have been quite open with her, and have always told her that I could not be Arthur Fletcher's wife."

"Why on earth should you marry to please them?"

"Because they don't know Ferdinand they are determined to insult him. It is an insult never to mention even his name. And to refuse to come to my marriage! The world is wide and there is room for us and them; but it makes me unhappy,—very unhappy,—that I should have to break with them." And then the tears came into her eyes. It was intended, no doubt, to be a complete breach, for not a single wedding present was sent from Wharton Hall to the bride. But from Longbarns,—from John Fletcher himself,—there did come an elaborate coffee-pot, which, in spite of its inutility and ugliness, was very valuable to Emily.

But there was one other of her old Herefordshire friends who received the tidings of her marriage without quarrelling with her. She herself had written to her old lover.

"My dear Arthur,—There has been so much true friendship and affection between us that I do not like that you should hear from any one but myself the news that I am going to be married to Mr. Lopez.

We are to be married on the 28th of November,—this day month.

"Yours affectionately,
"EMILY WHARTON."

To this she received a very short reply:—

"Dear Emily,—I am as I always have been.
"Yours,
"A. F."

He sent her no present, nor did he say a word to her beyond this; but in her anger against the Herefordshire people she never included Arthur Fletcher. She pored over the little note a score of times, and wept over it, and treasured it up among her inmost treasures, and told herself that it was a thousand pities. She could talk, and did talk, to Ferdinand about the Whartons, and about old Mrs. Fletcher, and described to him the arrogance and the stiffness and the ignorance of the Herefordshire squirearchy generally; but she never spoke to him of Arthur Fletcher,—except in that one narrative of her past life, in which, girl-like, she told her lover of the one other lover who had loved her.

But these things of course gave a certain melancholy to the occasion which perhaps was increased by the season of the year,—by the November fogs, and by the emptiness and general sadness of the town. And added to this was the melancholy of old Mr. Wharton himself. After he had given his consent to the marriage he admitted a certain amount of intimacy with his son-in-law, asking him to dinner, and discussing with him matters of general interest,—but never, in truth, opening his heart to him. Indeed, how can any man

open his heart to one whom he dislikes? At best he can only pretend to open his heart, and even this Mr. Wharton would not do. And very soon after the engagement Lopez left London and went to the Duke's place in the country. His objects in doing this and his aspirations in regard to a seat in Parliament were all made known to his future wife,—but he said not a word on the subject to her father; and she, acting under his instructions, was equally reticent. "He will get to know me in time," he said to her, "and his manner will be softened towards me. But till that time shall come, I can hardly expect him to take a real interest in my welfare."

When Lopez left London not a word had been said between him and his father-in-law as to money. Mr. Wharton was content with such silence, not wishing to make any promise as to immediate income from himself, pretending to look at the matter as though he should say that, as his daughter had made for herself her own bed, she must lie on it, such as it might be. And this silence certainly suited Ferdinand Lopez at the time. To tell the truth of him,—though he was not absolutely penniless, he was altogether propertyless. He had been speculating in money without capital, and though he had now and again been successful, he had also now and again failed. He had contrived that his name should be mentioned here and there with the names of well-known wealthy commercial men, and had for the last twelve months made up a somewhat intimate alliance with that very sound commercial man, Mr. Mills Happerton. But his dealings with Mr. Sextus Parker were in truth much more confidential than those with Mr. Mills Happerton, and

at the present moment poor Sexty Parker was alternately between triumph and despair as things went this way or that.

It was not, therefore, surprising that Ferdinand Lopez should volunteer no statements to the old lawyer about money, and that he should make no inquiries. He was quite confident that Mr. Wharton had the wealth which was supposed to belong to him, and was willing to trust to his power of obtaining a fair portion of it as soon as he should in truth be Mr. Wharton's son-in-law. Situated as he was, of course he must run some risk. And then, too, he had spoken of himself with a grain of truth when he had told the Duchess that he was not marrying for money. Ferdinand Lopez was not an honest man or a good man. He was a self-seeking, intriguing adventurer, who did not know honesty from dishonesty when he saw them together. But he had at any rate this good about him, that he did love the girl whom he was about to marry. He was willing to cheat all the world,—so that he might succeed, and make a fortune, and become a big and a rich man; but he did not wish to cheat her. It was his ambition now to carry her up with him, and he thought how he might best teach her to assist him in doing so,—how he might win her to help him in his cheating, especially in regard to her own father. For to himself, to his own thinking, that which we call cheating was not dishonesty. To his thinking there was something bold, grand, picturesque, and almost beautiful in the battle which such a one as himself must wage with the world before he could make his way up in it. He would not pick a pocket, or turn a false card, or, as he thought, forge a name. That which he did, and desired to do,

took with him the name of speculation. When he persuaded poor Sexty Parker to hazard his all, knowing well that he induced the unfortunate man to believe what was false, and to trust what was utterly untrustworthy, he did not himself think that he was going beyond the lines of fair enterprise. Now, in his marriage, he had in truth joined himself to real wealth. Could he only command at once that which he thought ought to be his wife's share of the lawyer's money, he did not doubt but that he could make a rapid fortune. It would not do for him to seem to be desirous of the money a day before the time;—but, when the time should come, would not his wife help him in his great career? But before she could do so she must be made to understand something of the nature of that career, and of the need of such aid.

Of course there arose the question where they should live. But he was ready with an immediate answer to this question. He had been to look at a flat,—a set of rooms,—in the Belgrave Mansions, in Pimlico, or Belgravia you ought more probably to call it. He proposed to take them furnished till they could look about at their leisure and get a house that should suit them. Would she like a flat? She would have liked a cellar with him, and so she told him. Then they went to look at the flat, and old Mr. Wharton condescended to go with them. Though his heart was not in the business, still he thought that he was bound to look after his daughter's comfort. "They are very handsome rooms," said Mr. Wharton, looking round upon the rather gorgeous furniture.

"Oh, Ferdinand, are they not too grand?" said Emily.

"Perhaps they are a little more than we quite want just at present," he said. "But I 'll tell you, sir, just how it has happened. A man I know wanted to let them for one year, just as they are, and offered them to me for £450,—if I could pay the money in advance, at the moment. And so I paid it."

"You have taken them, then?" said Mr. Wharton.

"Is it all settled?" said Emily, almost with disappointment.

"I have paid the money, and I have so far taken them. But it is by no means settled. You have only to say you don't like them, and you shall never be asked to put your foot in them again."

"But I do like them," she whispered to him.

"The truth is, sir, that there is not the slightest difficulty in parting with them. So that when the chance came in my way I thought it best to secure the thing. It had all to be done, so to say, in an hour. My friend,—as far as he was a friend, for I don't know much about him,—wanted the money and wanted to be off. So here they are, and Emily can do as she likes." Of course the rooms were regarded from that moment as the home for the next twelve months of Mr. and Mrs. Ferdinand Lopez.

And then they were married. The marriage was by no means a gay affair, the chief management of it falling into the hands of Mrs. Dick Roby. Mrs. Dick indeed provided not only the breakfast,—or saw rather that it was provided, for of course Mr. Wharton paid the bill,—but the four bridesmaids also, and all the company. They were married in the church in Vere Street, then went back to the house in Manchester Square, and within a couple of hours were on their

road to Dover. Through it all not a word was said about money. At the last moment,—when he was free from fear as to any questions about his own affairs,—Lopez had hoped that the old man would say something. "You will find so many thousand pounds at your banker's;"—or, "You may look to me for so many hundreds a year." But there was not a word. The girl had come to him without the assurance of a single shilling. In his great endeavour to get her he had been successful. As he thought of this in the carriage, he pressed his arm close round her waist. If the worst were to come to the worst, he would fight the world for her. But if this old man should be stubborn, close-fisted, and absolutely resolved to bestow all his money upon his son because of this marriage,—ah!—how should he be able to bear such a wrong as that?

Half-a-dozen times during that journey to Dover he resolved to think nothing further about it, at any rate for a fortnight; and yet, before he reached Dover, he had said a word to her. "I wonder what your father means to do about money? He never told you?"

"Not a word."

"It is very odd that he should never have said anything."

"Does it matter, dear?"

"Not in the least. But of course I have to talk about everything to you;—and it is odd."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE HONEYMOON.

On the morning of his marriage, before he went to the altar, Lopez made one or two resolutions as to his future conduct. The first was that he would give himself a fortnight from his marriage day in which he would not even think of money. He had made certain arrangements, in the course of which he had caused Sextus Parker to stare with surprise and to sweat with dismay, but which nevertheless were successfully concluded. Bills were drawn to run over to February, and ready money to a moderate extent was forthcoming, and fiscal tranquillity was insured for a certain short period. The confidence which Sextus Parker had once felt in his friend's own resources was somewhat on the decline, but he still believed in his friend's skill and genius, and, after due inquiry, he believed entirely in his friend's father-in-law. Sextus Parker still thought that things would come round. Ferdinand,—he always now called his friend by his Christian name,—Ferdinand was beautifully, seraphically confident. And Sexty, who had been in a manner magnetised by Ferdinand, was confident too—at certain periods of the day. He was very confident when he had had his two or three glasses of sherry at luncheon, and he was often delightfully confident with his cigar and brandy and water at night. But there were periods

in the morning in which he would shake with fear and sweat with dismay.

But Lopez himself, having with his friend's assistance arranged his affairs comfortably for a month or two, had, as a first resolution, promised himself a fortnight's freedom from all carking cares. His second resolution had been that at the end of the fortnight he would commence his operations on Mr. Wharton. Up to the last moment he had hoped,—had almost expected,—that a sum of money would have been paid to him. Even a couple of thousand pounds for the time would have been of great use to him;—but no tender of any kind had been made. Not a word had been said. Things could not, of course, go on in that way. He was not going to play the coward with his father-in-law. Then he bethought himself how he would act if his father-in-law were sternly to refuse to do anything for him, and he assured himself that in such circumstances he would make himself very disagreeable to his father-in-law. And then his third resolution had reference to his wife. She must be instructed in his ways. She must learn to look at the world with his eyes. She must be taught the great importance of money,—not in a griping, hard-fisted, prosaic spirit; but that she might participate in that feeling of his own which had in it so much that was grand, so much that was delightful, so much that was picturesque. He would never ask her to be parsimonious,—never even to be economical. He would take a glory in seeing her well dressed and well attended, with her own carriage and her own jewels. But she must learn that the enjoyment of these things must be built upon a conviction that the most important pursuit in the world was the

acquiring of money. And she must be made to understand, first of all, that she had a right to at any rate a half of her father's fortune. He had perceived that she had much influence with her father, and she must be taught to use this influence unscrupulously on her husband's behalf.

We have already seen that under the pressure of his thoughts he did break his first resolution within an hour or two of his marriage. It is easy for a man to say that he will banish care, so that he may enjoy to the full the delights of the moment. But this is a power which none but a savage possesses,—or perhaps an Irishman. We have learned the lesson from the divines, the philosophers, and the poets. Post equitem sedet atra cura. Thus was Ferdinand Lopez mounted high on his horse,—for he had triumphed greatly in his marriage, and really felt that the world could give him no delight so great as to have her beside him, and her as his own. But the inky devil sat close upon his shoulders. Where would he be at the end of three months if Mr. Wharton would do nothing for him,—and if a certain venture in guano, to which he had tempted Sexty Parker, should not turn out the right way? He believed in the guano and he believed in Mr. Wharton, but it is a terrible thing to have one's whole position in the world hanging upon either an unwilling father-in-law or a probable rise in the value of manure! And then how would he reconcile himself to her if both father-in-law and guano should go against him, and how should he endure her misery?

The inky devil had forced him to ask the question even before they had reached Dover. "Does it matter?" she had asked. Then for the time he had re-

pudiated his solicitude, and had declared that no question of money was of much consequence to him,—thereby making his future task with her so much the more difficult. After that he said nothing to her on the subject on that their wedding day,—but he could not prevent himself from thinking of it. Had he gone to the depth of ruin without a wife, what would it have mattered? For years past he had been at the same kind of work,—but while he was unmarried there had been a charm in the very danger. And as a single man he had succeeded, being sometimes utterly impecunious, but still with a capacity of living. Now he had laden himself with a burden of which the very intensity of his love immensely increased the weight. As for not thinking of it, that was impossible. Of course she must help him. Of course she must be taught how imperative it was that she should help him at once. "Is there anything troubles you?" she said, as she sat leaning against him after their dinner in the hotel at Dover.

"What should trouble me on such a day as this?"

"If there is anything, tell it me. I do not mean to say now, at this moment,—unless you wish it. Whatever may be your troubles, it shall be my greatest happiness, as it is my first duty, to lessen them if I can."

The promise was very well. It all went in the right direction. It showed him that she was at any rate prepared to take a part in the joint work of their life. But, nevertheless, she should be spared for the moment. "When there is trouble, you shall be told everything," he said, pressing his lips to her brow, "but there is nothing that need trouble you yet." He smiled as he

said this, but there was something in the tone of his voice which told her that there would be trouble.

When he was in Paris he received a letter from Parker, to whom he had been obliged to intrust a running address, but from whom he had enforced a promise that there should be no letter-writing unless under very pressing circumstances. The circumstances had not been pressing. The letter contained only one paragraph of any importance, and that was due to what Lopez tried to regard as fidgety cowardice on the part of his ally. "Please to bear in mind that I can't and won't arrange for the bills for £1,500 due 3rd February." That was the paragraph. Who had asked him to arrange for these bills? And yet Lopez was well aware that he intended that poor Sexty should "arrange" for them, in the event of his failure to make arrangements with Mr. Wharton.

At last he was quite unable to let the fortnight pass by without beginning the lessons which his wife had to learn. As for that first intention as to driving his cares out of his own mind for that time, he had long since abandoned even the attempt. It was necessary to him that a considerable sum of money should be extracted from the father-in-law, at any rate before the end of January, and a week or even a day might be of importance. They had hurried on southwards from Paris, and before the end of the first week had passed over the Simplon, and were at a pleasant inn on the shores of Como. Everything in their travels had been as yet delightful to Emily. This man, of whom she knew in truth so little, had certain good gifts,—gifts of intellect, gifts of temper, gifts of voice and manner and outward appearance,—which had hitherto satisfied her. A hus-

band who is also an eager lover must be delightful to a young bride. And hitherto no lover could have been more tender than Lopez. Every word and every act, every look and every touch, had been loving. Had she known the world better she might have felt, perhaps, that something was expected where so much was given. Perhaps a rougher manner, with some little touch of marital self-assertion, might be a safer commencement of married life,—safer to the wife as coming from her husband. Arthur Fletcher by this time would have asked her to bring him his slippers, taking infinite pride in having his little behests obeyed by so sweet a servitor. That also would have been pleasant to her had her heart in the first instance followed his image; but now also the idolatry of Ferdinand Lopez had been very pleasant.

But the moment for the first lesson had come. "Your father has not written to you since you started?" he said.

"Not a line. He has not known our address. He is never very good at letter-writing. I did write to him from Paris, and I scribbled a few words to Everett yesterday."

"It is very odd that he should never have written to me."

"Did you expect him to write?"

"To tell you the truth, I rather did. Not that I should have dreamed of his corresponding with me had he spoken to me on a certain subject. But as, on that subject, he never opened his mouth to me, I almost thought he would write."

"Do you mean about money?" she asked, in a very low voice.

"Well;—yes; I do mean about money. Things

hitherto have gone so very strangely between us. Sit down, dear, till we have a real domestic talk."

"Tell me everything," she said, as she nestled herself close to his side.

"You know how it was at first between him and me. He objected to me violently,—I mean openly, to my face. But he based his objection solely on my nationality,—nationality and blood. As to my condition in the world, fortune, or income, he never asked a word. That was strange."

"I suppose he thought he knew."

"He could not have thought he knew, dearest. But it was not for me to force the subject upon him. You can see that."

"I am sure whatever you did was right, Ferdinand."

"He is indisputably a rich man,—one who might be supposed to be able and willing to give an only daughter a considerable fortune. Now I certainly had never thought of marrying for money." Here she rubbed her face upon his arm. "I felt that it was not for me to speak of money. If he chose to be reticent, I could be so equally. Had he asked me, I should have told him that I had no fortune, but was making a large though precarious income. It would then be for him to declare what he intended to do. That would, I think, have been preferable. As it is we are all in doubt. In my position a knowledge of what your father intends to do would be most valuable to me."

"Should you not ask him?"

"I believe there has always been a perfect confidence between you and him?"

"Certainly,—as to all our ways of living. But he never said a word to me about money in his life."

"And yet, my darling, money is most important."

"Of course it is. I know that, Ferdinand."

"Would you mind asking?" She did not answer him at once, but sat thinking. And he also paused before he went on with his lesson. But, in order that the lesson should be efficacious, it would be as well that he should tell her as much as he could even at this first lecture. "To tell you the truth, this is quite essential to me at present,—very much more than I had thought it would be when we fixed the day for our marriage." Her mind within her recoiled at this, though she was very careful that he should not feel any such motion in her body. "My business is precarious."

"What is your business, Ferdinand?" Poor girl! That she should have been allowed to marry a man, and then have to ask such a question!

"It is generally commercial. I buy and sell on speculation. The world, which is shy of new words, has not yet given it a name. I am a good deal at present in the South American trade." She listened, but received no glimmering of an idea from his words. "When we were engaged everything was as bright as roses with me."

"Why did you not tell me this before,—so that we might have been more prudent?"

"Such prudence would have been horrid to me. But the fact is that I should not now have spoken to you at all, but that since we left England I have had letters from a sort of partner of mine. In our business things will go astray sometimes. It would be of great service to me if I could learn what are your father's intentions."

"You want him to give you some money at once."

"It would not be unusual, dear,—when there is money to be given. But I want you specially to ask him what he himself would propose to do. He knows already that I have taken a home for you and paid for it, and he knows—— But it does not signify going into that."

"Tell me everything."

"He is aware that there are many expenses. Of course if he were a poor man there would not be a word about it. I can with absolute truth declare that had he been penniless it would have made no difference as to my suit to you. But it would possibly have made some difference as to our after plans. He is a thorough man of the world, and he must know all that. I am sure he must feel that something is due to you,—and to me as your husband. But he is odd-tempered, and, as I have not spoken to him, he chooses to be silent to me. Now, my darling, you and I cannot afford to wait to see who can be silent the longest."

"What do you want me to do?"

"To write to him."

"And ask him for money?"

"Not exactly in that way. I think you should say that we should be glad to know what he intends to do, also saying that a certain sum of money would at present be of use to me."

"Would it not be better from you? I only ask, Ferdinand. I never have even spoken to him about money, and of course he would know that you had dictated what I said."

"No doubt he would. It is natural that I should do so. I hope the time may come when I may write quite freely to your father myself, but hitherto he has hardly

been courteous to me. I would rather that you should write,—if you do not mind it. Write your own letter, and show it me. If there is anything too much or anything too little I will tell you."

And so the first lesson was taught. The poor young wife did not at all like the lesson. Even within her own bosom she found no fault with her husband. But she began to understand that the life before her was not to be a life of roses. The first word spoken to her in the train, before it reached Dover, had explained something of this to her. She had felt at once that there would be trouble about money. And now, though she did not at all understand what might be the nature of those troubles, though she had derived no information whatever from her husband's hints about the South American trade, though she was as ignorant as ever of his affairs, yet she felt that the troubles would come soon. But never for a moment did it seem to her that he had been unjust in bringing her into troubled waters. They had loved each other, and therefore, whatever might be the troubles, it was right that they should marry each other. There was not a spark of anger against him in her bosom;—but she was unhappy.

He demanded from her the writing of the letter almost immediately after the conversation which has been given above, and of course the letter was written,—written and recopied, for the paragraph about the money was, of course, at last of his wording. And she could not make the remainder of the letter pleasant. The feeling that she was making a demand for money on her father ran through it all. But the reader need only see the passage in which Ferdinand Lopez made his demand,—through her hand.

"Ferdinand has been speaking to me about my fortune." It had gone much against the grain with her to write these words "my fortune." "But I have no fortune," she said. He insisted, however, explaining to her that she was entitled to use these words by her father's undoubted wealth. And so, with an aching heart, she wrote them. "Ferdinand has been speaking to me about my fortune. Of course I told him that I knew nothing, and that as he had never spoken to me about money before our marriage, I had never asked about it. He says that it would be of great service to him to know what are your intentions; and also that he hopes you may find it convenient to allow him to draw upon you for some portion of it at present. He says that £3,000 would be of great use to him in his business." That was the paragraph, and the work of writing it was so distasteful to her that she could hardly bring herself to form the letters. It seemed as though she were seizing the advantage of the first moment of her freedom to take a violent liberty with her father.

"It is altogether his own fault, my pet," he said to her. "I have the greatest respect in the world for your father, but he has allowed himself to fall into the habit of keeping all his affairs secret from his children; and, of course, as they go out into the world, this secrecy must in some degree be invaded. There is precisely the same thing going on between him and Everett; only Everett is a great deal rougher to him than you are likely to be. He never will let Everett know whether he is to regard himself as a rich man or a poor man."

"He gives him an allowance."

"Because he cannot help himself. To you he does not do even as much as that, because he can help him-

self. I have chosen to leave it to him and he has done nothing. But this is not quite fair, and he must be told so. I don't think he could be told in more dutiful language."

Emily did not like the idea of telling her father anything which he might not like to hear; but her husband's behests were to her in these, her early married days, quite imperative.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE END OF THE HONEYMOON.

Mrs. Lopez had begged her father to address his reply to her at Florence, where,—as she explained to him,—they expected to find themselves within a fortnight from the date of her writing. They had reached the lake about the end of November, when the weather had still been fine, but they intended to pass the winter months of December and January within the warmth of the cities. That intervening fortnight was to her a period of painful anticipation. She feared to see her father's handwriting, feeling almost sure that he would be bitterly angry with her. During this time her husband frequently spoke to her about the letter,—about her own letter and her father's expected reply. It was necessary that she should learn her lesson, and she could only do so by having the subject of money made familiar to her ears. It was not a part of his plan to tell her anything of the means by which he hoped to make himself a wealthy man. The less she knew of that the better. But the fact that her father absolutely owed to him a large amount of money as her fortune could not be made too clear to her. He was very desirous to do this in such a manner as not to make her think that he was accusing her,—or that he would accuse her if the money were not forthcoming. But she must learn the fact, and must be imbued with the conviction that her husband would be the most ill-

treated of men unless the money were forthcoming. "I am a little nervous about it too," said he, alluding to the expected letter;—"not so much as to the money itself, though that is important; but as to his conduct. If he chooses simply to ignore us after our marriage he will be behaving very badly." She had no answer to make to this. She could not defend her father, because by doing so she would offend her husband. And yet her whole life-long trust in her father could not allow her to think it possible that he should behave ill to them.

On their arrival at Florence he went at once to the post-office, but there was as yet no letter. The fortnight, however, which had been named had only just run itself out. They went on from day to day inspecting buildings, looking at pictures, making for themselves a taste in marble and bronze, visiting the lovely villages which cluster on the hills round the city,—doing precisely in this respect as do all young married couples who devote a part of their honeymoon to Florence;—but in all their little journeyings and in all their work of pleasure the inky devil sat not only behind him but behind her also. The heavy care of life was already beginning to work furrows on her face. She would already sit, knitting her brow, as she thought of coming troubles. Would not her father certainly refuse? And would not her husband then begin to be less loving and less gracious to herself?

Every day for a week he called at the post-office when he went out with her, and still the letter did not come. "It can hardly be possible," he said at last to her, "that he should decline to answer his own daughter's letter."

"Perhaps he is ill," she replied.

"If there were anything of that kind Everett would tell us."

"Perhaps he has gone back to Herefordshire?"

"Of course his letter would go after him. I own it is very singular to me that he should not write. It looks as though he were determined to cast you off from him altogether because you have married against his wishes."

"Not that, Ferdinand;—do not say that!"

"Well; we shall see."

And on the next day they did see. He went to the post-office before breakfast, and on this day he returned with a letter in his hand. She was sitting waiting for him with a book in her lap, and saw the letter at once. "Is it from papa?" she said. He nodded his head as he handed it to her. "Open it and read it, Ferdinand. I have got to be so nervous about it, that I cannot do it. It seems to be so important."

"Yes;—it is important," he said with a grim smile, and then he opened the letter. She watched his face closely as he read it, and at first she could tell nothing from it. Then, in that moment, it first occurred to her that he had a wonderful command of his features. All this, however, lasted but half a minute. Then he chucked the letter, lightly, in among the tea-cups, and coming to her took her closely in his arms and almost hurt her by the violence of his repeated kisses.

"Has he written kindly?" she said, as soon as she could find her breath to speak.

"By George, he 's a brick after all. I own I did not think it. My darling, how much I owe you for all the trouble I have given you."

"Oh, Ferdinand! if he has been good to you I shall be so happy."

"He has been awfully good. Ha, ha, ha!" And then he began walking about the room as he laughed in an unnatural way. "Upon my word it is a pity we did n't say four thousand, or five. Think of his taking me just at my word. It 's a great deal better than I expected; that 's all I can say. And at the present moment it is of the utmost importance to me."

All this did not take above a minute or two, but during that minute or two she had been so bewildered by his manner as almost to fancy that the expressions of his delight had been ironical. He had been so unlike himself as she had known him that she almost doubted the reality of his joy. But when she took the letter and read it, she found that his joy was true enough. The letter was very short, and was as follows:—

"My dear Emily,—What you have said under your husband's instruction about money, I find upon consideration to be fair enough. I think he should have spoken to me before his marriage; but then again perhaps I ought to have spoken to him. As it is, I am willing to give him the sum he requires, and I will pay £3,000 to his account, if he would tell me where he would have it lodged. Then I shall think I have done my duty by him. What I shall do with the remainder of any money that I may have, I do not think he is entitled to ask.

"Everett is well again, and as idle as ever. Your Aunt Roby is making a fool of herself at Harrogate. I

have heard nothing from Herefordshire. Everything is very quiet and lonely here.

"Your affectionate father,

"A. WHARTON."

As he had dined at the Eldon every day since his daughter had left him, and had played on an average a dozen rubbers of whist daily, he was not justified in complaining of the loneliness of London.

The letter seemed to Emily herself to be very cold, and had not her husband rejoiced over it so warmly she would have considered it to be unsatisfactory. No doubt the £3,000 would be given; but that, as far as she could understand her father's words, was to be the whole of her fortune. She had never known anything of her father's affairs or of his intentions, but she had certainly supposed that her fortune would be very much more than this. She had learned in some indirect way that a large sum of money would have gone with her hand to Arthur Fletcher, could she have brought herself to marry that suitor favoured by her family. And now, having learned, as she had learned, that money was of vital importance to her husband, she was dismayed at what seemed to her to be parental parsimony. But he was overjoyed,—so much so that for a while he lost that restraint over himself which was habitual to him. He ate his breakfast in a state of exultation, and talked,—not alluding specially to this £3,000,—as though he had the command of almost unlimited means. He ordered a carriage and drove her out, and bought presents for her,—things as to which they had both before decided that they should not be bought because of the expense. "Pray don't

spend your money for me," she said to him. "It is nice to have you giving me things, but it would be nicer to me even than that to think that I could save you expense."

But he was not in a mood to be denied. "You don't understand," he said. "I don't want to be saved from little extravagances of this sort. Owing to circumstances your father's money was at this moment of importance to me;—but he has answered to the whip and the money is there, and that trouble is over. We can enjoy ourselves now. Other troubles will spring up, no doubt, before long."

She did not quite like being told that her father had "answered to the whip,"—but she was willing to believe that it was a phrase common among men to which it would be prudish to make objection. There was, also, something in her husband's elation which was distasteful to her. Could it be that reverses of fortune with reference to moderate sums of money, such as this which was now coming into his hands, would always affect him in the same way? Was it not almost unmanly, or at any rate was it not undignified? And yet she tried to make the best of it, and lent herself to his holiday mood as well as she was able. "Shall I write and thank papa?" she said that evening.

"I have been thinking of that," he said. "You can write if you like, and of course you will. But I also will write, and had better do so a post or two before you. As he has come round I suppose I ought to show myself civil. What he says about the rest of his money is of course absurd. I shall ask him nothing about it, but no doubt after a bit he will make per-

manent arrangements." Everything in the business wounded her more or less. She now perceived that he regarded this £3,000 only as the first instalment of what he might get, and that his joy was due simply to this temporary success. And then he called her father absurd to her face. For a moment she thought that she would defend her father; but she could not as yet bring herself to question her husband's words even on such a subject as that.

He did write to Mr. Wharton, but in doing so he altogether laid aside that flighty manner which for a while had annoyed her. He thoroughly understood that the wording of the letter might be very important to him, and he took much trouble with it. It must be now the great work of his life to ingratiate himself with this old man, so that, at any rate at the old man's death, he might possess at least half of the old man's money. He must take care that there should be no division between his wife and her father of such a nature as to make the father think that his son ought to enjoy any special privilege of primogeniture or of male inheritance. And if it could be so managed that the daughter should, before the old man's death, become his favourite child, that also would be well. He was therefore very careful about the letter, which was as follows:—

"My dear Mr. Wharton,—I cannot let your letter to Emily pass without thanking you myself for the very liberal response made by you to what was of course a request from myself. Let me in the first place assure you that had you, before our marriage, made any in-

quiry about my money affairs I would have told you everything with accuracy; but as you did not do so I thought that I should seem to intrude upon you, if I introduced the subject. It is too long for a letter, but whenever you may like to allude to it, you will find that I will be quite open with you.

"I am engaged in business which often requires the use of a considerable amount of capital. It has so happened that even since we were married the immediate use of a sum of money became essential to me to save me from sacrificing a cargo of guano which will be of greatly increased value in three months' time, but which otherwise must have gone for what it would now fetch. Your kindness will see me through that difficulty.

"Of course there is something precarious in such a business as mine;—but I am endeavouring to make it less so from day to day, and hope very shortly to bring it into that humdrum groove which best befits a married man. Should I ask further assistance from you in doing this, perhaps you will not refuse it if I can succeed in making the matter clear to you. As it is I thank you sincerely for what you have done. I will ask you to pay the £3,000 you have so kindly promised, to my account at Messrs. Hunky & Sons, Lombard Street. They are not regular bankers, but I have an account there.

"We are wandering about and enjoying ourselves mightily in the properly romantic manner. Emily sometimes seems to think that she would like to give up business, and London, and all sublunary troubles, in order that she might settle herself for life under an Italian sky. But the idea does not generally remain

with her very long. Already she is beginning to show symptoms of home-sickness in regard to Manchester Square.

"Yours always most faithfully,

"FERDINAND LOPEZ."

To this letter Lopez received no reply;—nor did he expect one. Between Emily and her father a few letters passed, not very long; nor, as regarded those from Mr. Wharton, were they very interesting. In none of them, however, was there any mention of money. But early in January Lopez received a most pressing,—we might almost say an agonising letter from his friend Parker. The gist of the letter was to make Lopez understand that Parker must at once sell certain interests in a coming cargo of guano,—at whatever sacrifice,—unless he could be certified as to that money which must be paid in February, and which he, Parker, must pay, should Ferdinand Lopez be at that moment unable to meet his bond. The answer sent to Parker shall be given to the reader:—

"My dear old awfully silly, and absurdly impatient Friend,—You are always like a toad under a harrow, and that without the slightest cause. I have money lying at Hunky's more than double enough for the bills. Why can't you trust a man? If you won't trust me in saying so, you can go to Mills Happerton and ask him. But, remember, I shall be very much annoyed if you do so,—and that such an inquiry cannot but be injurious to me. If, however, you won't believe me, you can go and ask. At any rate don't meddle with the guano. We should lose over £1,000 each of us, if

you were to do so. By George, a man should neither marry, nor leave London for a day, if he has to do with a fellow so nervous as you are. As it is I think I shall be back a week or two before my time is properly up, lest you and one or two others should think that I have levanted altogether.

"I have no hesitation in saying that more fortunes are lost in business by trembling cowardice than by any amount of imprudence or extravagance. My hair stands on end when you talk of parting with guano in December because there are bills which have to be met in February. Pluck up your heart, man, and look around, and see what is done by men with good courage.

"Yours always,

"FERDINAND LOPEZ."

These were the only communications between our married couple and their friends at home with which I need trouble my readers. Nor need I tell any further tales of their honeymoon. If the time was not one of complete and unalloyed joy to Emily,—and we must fear that it was not,—it is to be remembered that but very little complete and unalloyed joy is allowed to sojourners in this vale of tears, even though they have been but two months married. In the first week in February they appeared in the Belgrave mansion, and Emily Lopez took possession of her new home with a heart as full of love for her husband as it had been when she walked out of the church in Vere Street, though it may be that some of her sweetest illusions had already been dispelled.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DUKE'S MISERY.

We must go back for a while to Gatherum Castle and see the guests whom the Duchess had collected there for her Christmas festivities. The hospitality of the Duke's house had been maintained almost throughout the autumn. Just at the end of October they went to Matching, for what the Duchess called a quiet month,—which, however, at the Duke's urgent request became six weeks. But even here the house was full all the time, though from deficiency of bedrooms the guests were very much less numerous. But at Matching the Duchess had been uneasy and almost cross. Mrs. Finn had gone with her husband to Ireland, and she had taught herself to fancy that she could not live without Mrs. Finn. And her husband had insisted upon having round him politicians of his own sort, men who really preferred work to archery, or even to hunting, and who discussed the evils of direct taxation absolutely in the drawing-room. The Duchess was assured that the country could not be governed by the support of such men as these, and was very glad to get back to Gatherum,—whither also came Phineas Finn with his wife, and the St. Bungay people, and Barrington Erle, and Mr. Monk, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with Lord and Lady Cantrip, and Lord and Lady Drummond,—Lord Drummond being the only representative of the other or coalesced party.

And Major Pountney was there, having been urgent with the Duchess,—and having fully explained to his friend Captain Gunner that he had acceded to the wishes of his hostess only on the assurance of her Grace that the house would not be again troubled by the presence of Ferdinand Lopez. Such assurances were common between the two friends, but were innocent, as, of course, neither believed the other. And Lady Rosina was again there,—with many others. The melancholy poverty of Lady Rosina had captivated the Duke. "She shall come and live here, if you like," the Duchess had said in answer to a request from her husband on his new friend's behalf,—"I 've no doubt she will be willing." The place was not crowded as it had been before; but still about thirty guests sat down to dinner daily, and Locock, Millepois, and Mrs. Pritchard were all kept hard at work. Nor was our Duchess idle. She was always making up the party,—meaning the Coalition,—doing something to strengthen the buttresses, writing little letters to little people, who, little as they were, might become big by amalgamation. "One has always to be binding one's fagot," she said to Mrs. Finn, having read her Æsop not altogether in vain. "Where should we have been without you?" she had whispered to Sir Orlando Drought when that gentleman was leaving Gatherum at the termination of his second visit. She had particularly disliked Sir Orlando, and was aware that her husband had on this occasion been hardly as gracious as he should have been, in true policy, to so powerful a colleague. Her husband had been peculiarly shy of Sir Orlando since the day on which they had walked together in the park,—and, consequently, the Duchess

had whispered to him. "Don't bind your fagot too conspicuously," Mrs. Finn had said to her. Then the Duchess had fallen to a seat almost exhausted by labour, mingled with regrets, and by the doubts which from time to time pervaded even her audacious spirit. "I 'm not a god," she said, "or a Pitt, or an Italian with a long name beginning with M, that I should be able to do these things without ever making a mistake. And yet they must be done. And as for him,—he does not help me in the least. He wanders about among the clouds of the multiplication table, and thinks that a majority will drop into his mouth because he does not shut it. Can you tie the fagot any better?" "I think I would leave it untied," said Mrs. Finn. "You would not do anything of the kind. You 'd be just as fussy as I am." And thus the game was carried on at Gatherum Castle from week to week.

"But you won't leave him?" This was said to Phineas Finn by his wife a day or two before Christmas, and the question was intended to ask whether Phineas thought of giving up his place.

"Not if I can help it."

"You like the work."

"That has but little to do with the question, unfortunately. I certainly like having something to do. I like earning money."

"I don't know why you like that, especially," said the wife, laughing.

"I do, at any rate,—and, in a certain sense, I like authority. But in serving with the Duke I find a lack of that sympathy which one should have with one's chief. He would never say a word to me unless I spoke to him. And when I do speak, though he is

studiously civil,—much too courteous,—I know that he is bored. He has nothing to say to me about the country. When he has anything to communicate, he prefers to write a minute for Warburton, who then writes to Morton,—and so it reaches me."

"Does n't it do as well?"

"It may do with me. There are reasons which bind me to him which will not bind other men. Men don't talk to me about it, because they know that I am bound to him through you. But I am aware of the feeling which exists. You can't be really loyal to a king if you never see him,—if he be always locked up in some almost divine recess."

"A king may make himself too common, Phineas."

"No doubt. A king has to know where to draw the line. But the Duke draws no intentional line at all. He is not by nature gregarious or communicative, and is therefore hardly fitted to be the head of a ministry."

"It will break her heart if anything goes wrong."

"She ought to remember that ministries seldom live very long," said Phineas. "But she 'll recover even if she does break her heart. She is too full of vitality to be much repressed by any calamity. Have you heard what is to done about Silverbridge?"

"The Duchess wants to get it for this man, Ferdinand Lopez."

"But it has not been promised yet?"

"The seat is not vacant," said Mrs. Finn, "and I don't know when it will be vacant. I think there is a hitch about it,—and I think the Duchess is going to be made very angry."

Throughout the autumn the Duke had been an un-

happy man. While the absolute work of the session had lasted he had found something to console him; but now, though he was surrounded by private secretaries, and though despatch-boxes went and came twice a day, though there were dozens of letters as to which he had to give some instruction,—yet there was in truth nothing for him to do. It seemed to him that all the real work of the Government had been filched from him by his colleagues, and that he was stuck up in pretended authority,—a kind of wooden Prime Minister, from whom no real ministration was demanded. His first fear had been that he was himself unfit;—but now he was uneasy, fearing that others thought him to be unfit. There was Mr. Monk with his budget, and Lord Drummond with his three or four dozen half-rebellious colonies, and Sir Orlando Drought with the House to lead and a ship to build, and Phineas Finn with his scheme of municipal Home Rule for Ireland, and Lord Ramsden with a codified Statute Book,—all full of work, all with something special to be done. But for him,—he had to arrange who should attend the Queen, what ribbons should be given away, and what middle-aged young man should move the address. He sighed as he thought of those happy days in which he used to fear that his mind and body would both give way under the pressure of decimal coinage.

But Phineas Finn had read the Duke's character rightly in saying that he was neither gregarious nor communicative, and therefore but little fitted to rule Englishmen. He had thought that it was so himself, and now from day to day he was becoming more assured of his own deficiency. He could not throw himself into cordial relations with the Sir Orlando

Droughts, or even with the Mr. Monks. But, though he had never wished to be put into his present high office, now that he was there he dreaded the sense of failure which would follow his descent from it. It is this feeling rather than genuine ambition, rather than the love of power or patronage or pay, which induces men to cling to place. The absence of real work, and the quantity of mock work, both alike made the life wearisome to him; but he could not endure the idea that it should be written in history that he had allowed himself to be made a faineant Prime Minister, and then had failed even in that. History would forget what he had done as a working Minister in recording the feebleness of the ministry which would bear his name.

The one man with whom he could talk freely, and from whom he could take advice, was now with him, here at his Castle. He was shy at first even with the Duke of St. Bungay, but that shyness he could generally overcome, after a few words. But though he was always sure of his old friend's sympathy and of his old friend's wisdom, yet he doubted his old friend's capacity to understand himself. The young Duke felt the old Duke to be thicker-skinned than himself and therefore unable to appreciate the thorns which so sorely worried his own flesh. "They talk to me about a policy," said the host. They were closeted at this time in the Prime Minister's own sanctum, and there yet remained an hour before they need dress for dinner.

"Who talks about a policy?"

"Sir Orlando Drought especially." For the Duke of Omnium had never forgotten the arrogance of that advice given in the park.

"Sir Orlando is of course entitled to speak, though I do not know that he is likely to say anything very well worth the hearing. What is his special policy?"

"If he had any, of course I would hear him. It is not that he wants any special thing to be done, but he thinks that I should get up some special thing in order that Parliament may be satisfied."

"If you wanted to create a majority that might be true. Just listen to him and have done with it."

"I cannot go on in that way. I cannot submit to what amounts to complaint from the gentlemen who are acting with me. Nor would they submit long to my silence. I am beginning to feel that I have been wrong."

"I don't think you have been wrong at all."

"A man is wrong if he attempts to carry a weight too great for his strength."

"A certain nervous sensitiveness, from which you should free yourself as from a disease, is your only source of weakness. Think about your business as a shoemaker thinks of his. Do your best, and then let your customers judge for themselves. Caveat emptor. A man should never endeavour to price himself, but should accept the price which others put on him,—only being careful that he should learn what that price is. Your policy should be to keep your Government together by a strong majority. After all, the making of new laws is too often but an unfortunate necessity laid on us by the impatience of the people. A lengthened period of quiet and therefore good government with a minimum of new laws would be the greatest benefit the country could receive. When I recommended you to comply with the Queen's behest I did so because I

thought that you might inaugurate such a period more certainly than any other one man." This old duke was quite content with a state of things such as he described. He had been a Cabinet Minister for more than half his life. He liked being a Cabinet Minister. He thought it well for the country generally that his party should be in power,—and if not his party in its entirety, then as much of his party as might be possible. He did not expect to be written of as a Pitt or a Somers; but he thought that memoirs would speak of him as a useful nobleman,—and he was contented. He was not only not ambitious himself, but the effervescence and general turbulence of ambition in other men were distasteful to him. Loyalty was second nature to him, and the power of submitting to defeat without either shame or sorrow had become perfect with him by long practice. He would have made his brother duke such as he was himself,—had not his brother duke been so lamentably thin-skinned.

"I suppose we must try it for another session?" said the Duke of Omnium with a lachrymose voice.

"Of course we must,—and for others after that, I both hope and trust," said the Duke of St. Bungay, getting up. "If I don't go upstairs I shall be late, and then her Grace will look at me with unforgiving eyes."

On the following day after lunch the Prime Minister took a walk with Lady Rosina De Courcy. He had fallen into a habit of walking with Lady Rosina almost every day of his life, till the people in the Castle began to believe that Lady Rosina was the mistress of some deep policy of her own. For there were many there who did in truth think that statecraft could never be absent from a Minister's mind, day or night. But in

truth Lady Rosina chiefly made herself agreeable to the Prime Minister by never making any most distant allusion to public affairs. It might be doubted whether she even knew that the man who paid her so much honour was the Head of the British Government as well as the Duke of Omnium. She was a tall, thin, shrivelled-up old woman,—not very old, fifty perhaps, but looking at least ten years more,—very melancholy, and sometimes very cross. She had been notably religious, but that was gradually wearing off as she advanced in years. The rigid strictness of Sabbatarian practice requires the full energy of middle life. She had been left entirely alone in the world, with a very small income, and not many friends who were in any way interested in her existence. But she knew herself to be Lady Rosina De Courcy, and felt that the possession of that name ought to be more to her than money and friends, or even than brothers and sisters. "The weather is not frightening you," said the Duke. Snow had fallen, and the paths, even where they had been swept, were wet and sloppy.

"Weather never frightens me, your Grace. I always have thick boots;—I am very particular about that;—and cork soles."

"Cork soles are admirable."

"I think I owe my life to cork soles," said Lady Rosina enthusiastically. "There is a man named Sprout in Silverbridge who makes them. Did your Grace ever try him for boots?"

"I don't think I ever did," said the Prime Minister.

"Then you had better. He 's very good and very cheap too. Those London tradesmen never think they can charge you enough. I find I can wear

Sprout's boots the whole winter through, and then have them resoled. I don't suppose you ever think of such things?"

"I like to have my feet dry."

"I have got to calculate what they cost." They then passed Major Pountney, who was coming and going between the stables and the house, and who took off his hat and who saluted the host and his companion with perhaps more flowing courtesy than was necessary. "I never have found out what that gentleman's name is yet," said Lady Rosina.

"Pountney, I think. I believe they call him Major Pountney."

"Oh, Pountney! There are Pountneys in Leicestershire. Perhaps he is one of them?"

"I don't know where he comes from," said the Duke, —"nor, to tell the truth, where he goes to." Lady Rosina looked up at him with an interested air. "He seems to be one of those idle men who get into people's houses Heaven knows why, and never do anything."

"I suppose you asked him?" said Lady Rosina.

"The Duchess did, I dare say."

"How odd it would be if she were to suppose that you had asked him."

"The Duchess, no doubt, knows all about it." Then there was a little pause. "She is obliged to have all sorts of people," said the Duke apologetically.

"I suppose so,—when you have so many coming and going. I am sorry to say that my time is up to-morrow, so that I shall make way for somebody else."

"I hope you won't think of going, Lady Rosina,—unless you are engaged elsewhere. We are delighted to have you."

"The Duchess has been very kind, but——"

"The Duchess, I fear, is almost too much engaged to see as much of her guests individually as she ought to do. To me your being here is a great pleasure."

"You are too good to me,—much too good. But I shall have stayed out my time, and I think, Duke, I will go to-morrow. I am very methodical, you know, and always act by rule. I have walked my two miles now, and I will go in. If you do want boots with cork soles, mind you go to Sprout's. Dear me! there is that Major Pountney again. That is four times he has been up and down that path since we have been walking here."

Lady Rosina went in, and the Duke turned back, thinking of his friend and perhaps thinking of the cork soles of which she had to be so careful and which were so important to her comfort. It could not be that he fancied Lady Rosina to be clever, nor can we imagine that her conversation satisfied any of those wants to which he and all of us are subject. But nevertheless he liked Lady Rosina and was never bored by her. She was natural, and she wanted nothing from him. When she talked about cork soles she meant cork soles. And then she did not tread on any of his numerous corns. As he walked on he determined that he would induce his wife to persuade Lady Rosina to stay a little longer at the Castle. In meditating upon this he made another turn in the grounds and again came upon Major Pountney as that gentleman was returning from the stables. "A very cold afternoon," he said, feeling it to be ungracious to pass one of his own guests in his own grounds without a word of salutation.

"Very cold indeed, your Grace,—very cold." The Duke had intended to pass on, but the major managed to stop him by standing in the pathway. The major did not in the least know his man. He had heard that the Duke was shy, and therefore thought that he was timid. He had not hitherto been spoken to by the Duke,—a condition of things which he attributed to the Duke's shyness and timidity. But, with much thought on the subject, he had resolved that he would have a few words with his host, and had therefore passed backwards and forwards between the house and the stables rather frequently. "Very cold, indeed, but yet we 've had beautiful weather. I don't know when I have enjoyed myself so much altogether as I have at Gatherum Castle." The Duke bowed, and made a little but a vain effort to get on. "A splendid pile!" said the major, stretching his hand gracefully towards the building.

"It is a big house," said the Duke.

"A noble mansion;—perhaps the noblest mansion in the three kingdoms," said Major Pountney. "I have seen a great many of the best country residences in England, but nothing that at all equals Gatherum." Then the Duke made a little effort at progression, but was still stopped by the daring major. "By-the-bye, your Grace, if your Grace has a few minutes to spare, —just half a minute,—I wish you would allow me to say something." The Duke assumed a look of disturbance, but he bowed and walked on, allowing the major to walk by his side. "I have the greatest possible desire, my Lord Duke, to enter public life."

"I thought you were already in the army," said the Duke.

"So I am;—was on Sir Bartholomew Bone's staff in Canada for two years, and have seen as much of what I call home service as any man going. One of my chief objects is to take up the army."

"It seems that you have taken it up."

"I mean in Parliament, your Grace. I am very fairly off as regards private means, and would stand all the racket of the expense of a contest myself,—if there were one. But the difficulty is to get a seat, and, of course, if it can be privately managed, it is very comfortable." The Duke looked at him again,—this time without bowing. But the major, who was not observant, rushed on to his destruction. "We all know that Silverbridge will soon be vacant. Let me assure your Grace that if it might be consistent with your Grace's plans in other respects to turn your kind countenance towards me, you would find that you would have a supporter than whom none would be more staunch, and perhaps I may say one who in the House would not be the least useful!" That portion of the major's speech which referred to the Duke's kind countenance had been learned by heart, and was thrown trippingly off the tongue with a kind of twang. The major had perceived that he had not been at once interrupted when he began to open the budget of his political aspirations, and had allowed himself to indulge in pleasing auguries. "Nothing ask and nothing have," had been adopted as the motto of his life, and more than once he had expressed to Captain Gunner his conviction that,—"By George, if you 've only cheek enough, there is nothing you cannot get." On this emergency the major certainly was not deficient in cheek. "If I might be allowed to consider myself

your Grace's candidate, I should indeed be a happy man," said the major.

"I think, sir," said the Duke, "that your proposition is the most unbecoming and the most impertinent that ever was addressed to me." The major's mouth fell, and he stared with all his eyes as he looked up into the Duke's face. "Good afternoon," said the Duke, turning quickly round and walking away. The major stood for a while transfixed to the place, and, cold as was the weather, was bathed in perspiration. A keen sense of having "put his foot into it" almost crushed him for a time. Then he assured himself that, after all, the Duke "could not eat him," and with that consolatory reflection he crept back to the house and up to his own room.

To put the man down had of course been an easy task to the Duke, but he was not satisfied with that. To the major it seemed that the Duke had passed on with easy indifference;—but in truth he was very far from being easy. The man's insolent request had wounded him at many points. It was grievous to him that he should have as a guest in his own house a man whom he had been forced to insult. It was grievous to him that he himself should not have been held in personal respect high enough to protect him from such an insult. It was grievous to him that he should be openly addressed,—addressed by an absolute stranger,—as a borough-mongering lord, who would not scruple to give away a seat in Parliament as seats were given away in former days. And it was especially grievous to him that all these misfortunes should have come upon him as a part of the results of his wife's manner of exercising his hospitality. If this

was to be Prime Minister he certainly would not be Prime Minister much longer! Had any aspirant to political life ever dared so to address Lord Brock, or Lord De Terrier, or Mr. Mildmay, the old Premiers whom he remembered? He thought not. They had managed differently. They had been able to defend themselves from such attacks by personal dignity. And would it have been possible that any man should have dared so to speak to his uncle, the late Duke? He thought not. As he shut himself up in his own room he grieved inwardly with a deep grief. After a while he walked off to his wife's room, still perturbed in spirit. The perturbation had indeed increased from minute to minute. He would rather give up politics altogether and shut himself up in absolute seclusion than find himself subject to the insolence of any Pountney that might address him. With his wife he found Mrs. Finn. Now for this lady personally he entertained what for him was a warm regard. In various matters of much importance he and she had been brought together, and she had, to his thinking, invariably behaved well. And an intimacy had been established which had enabled him to be at ease with her, —so that her presence was often a comfort to him. But at the present moment he had not wished to find any one with his wife, and felt that she was in his way. "Perhaps I am disturbing you," he said in a tone of voice that was solemn and almost funereal.

"Not at all," said the Duchess, who was in high spirits. "I want to get your promise now about Silverbridge. Don't mind her. Of course she knows everything." To be told that anybody knew everything was another shock to him. "I have just got a

letter from Mr. Lopez." Could it be right that his wife should be corresponding on such a subject with a person so little known as this Mr. Lopez? "May I tell him that he shall have your interest when the seat is vacant?"

"Certainly not," said the Duke, with a scowl that was terrible even to his wife. "I wished to speak to you, but I wished to speak to you alone."

"I beg a thousand pardons," said Mrs. Finn, preparing to go.

"Don't stir, Marie," said the Duchess; "he is going to be cross."

"If Mrs. Finn will allow me, with every feeling of the most perfect respect and sincerest regard, to ask her to leave me with you for a few minutes, I shall be obliged. And if, with her usual hearty kindness, she will pardon my abruptness——" Then he could not go on, his emotion being too great; but he put out his hand, and taking hers raised it to his lips and kissed it. The moment had become too solemn for any further hesitation as to the lady's going. The Duchess for a moment was struck dumb, and Mrs. Finn, of course, left the room.

"In the name of Heaven, Plantagenet, what is the matter?"

"Who is Major Pountney?"

"Who is Major Pountney! How on earth should I know? He is——Major Pountney. He is about everywhere."

"Do not let him be asked into any house of mine again. But that is a trifle."

"Anything about Major Pountney must, I should think, be a trifle. Have tidings come that the heavens

are going to fall? Nothing short of that could make you so solemn."

"In the first place, Glencora, let me ask you not to speak to me again about the seat for Silverbridge. I am not at present prepared to argue the matter with you, but I have resolved that I will know nothing about the election. As soon as the seat is vacant, if it should be vacated, I shall take care that my determination be known in Silverbridge."

"Why should you abandon your privileges in that way? It is sheer weakness."

"The interference of any peer is unconstitutional."

"There is Braxon," said the Duchess energetically, "where the Marquis of Crumber returns the member regularly, in spite of all their Reform bills; and Bamford, and Cobblersborough;—and look at Lord Lumley with a whole county in his pocket, not to speak of two boroughs! What nonsense, Plantagenet! Anything is constitutional, or anything is unconstitutional, just as you choose to look at it." It was clear that the Duchess had really studied the subject carefully.

"Very well, my dear, let it be nonsense. I only beg to assure you that it is my intention, and I request you to act accordingly. And there is another thing I have to say to you. I shall be sorry to interfere in any way with the pleasure which you may derive from society, but as long as I am burdened with the office which has been imposed upon me, I will not again entertain any guests in my own house."

"Plantagenet!"

"You cannot turn the people out who are here now; but I beg that they may be allowed to go as the time

comes, and that their places may not be filled by further invitations."

"But further invitations have gone out ever so long ago, and have been accepted. You must be ill, my dear."

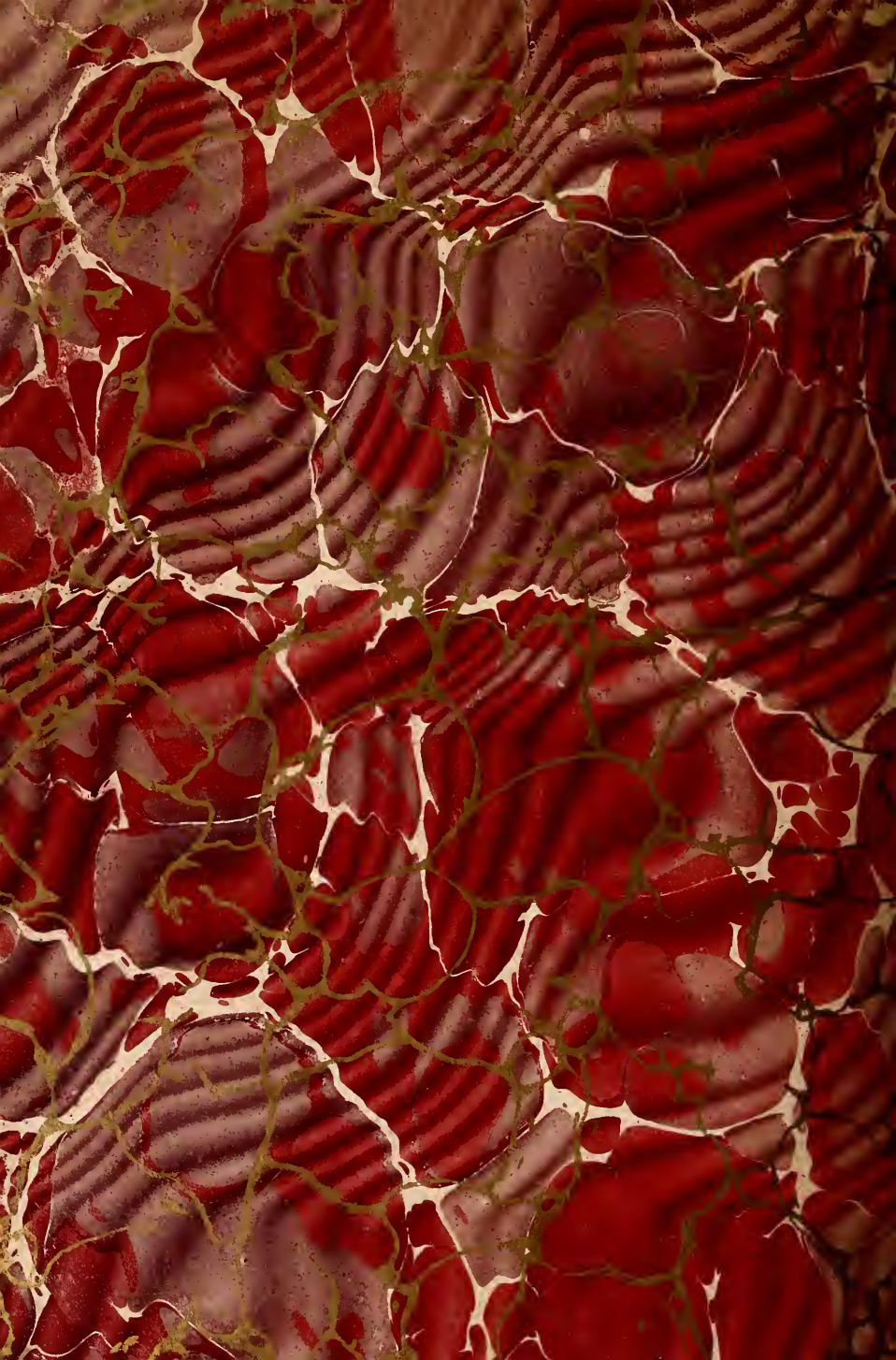
"Ill at ease,—yes. At any rate let none others be sent out." Then he remembered a kindly purpose which he had formed early in the day, and fell back upon that. "I should, however, be glad if you would ask Lady Rosina De Courcy to remain here." The Duchess stared at him, really thinking now that something was amiss with him. "The whole thing is a failure and I will have no more of it. It is degrading me." Then without allowing her a moment in which to answer him, he marched back to his own room.

But even here his spirit was not as yet at rest. That major must not go unpunished. Though he hated all fuss and noise he must do something. So he wrote as follows to the major:—

"The Duke of Omnium trusts that Major Pountney will not find it inconvenient to leave Gatherum Castle shortly. Should Major Pountney wish to remain at the Castle over the night, the Duke of Omnium hopes that he will not object to be served with his dinner and with his breakfast in his own room. A carriage and horses will be ready for Major Pountney's use, to take him to Silverbridge, as soon as Major Pountney may express to the servants his wish to that effect.

"Gatherum Castle, December, 18—."

This note the Duke sent by the hands of his own servant, having said enough to the man as to the car-

riage and the possible dinner in the major's bedroom to make the man understand almost exactly what had occurred. A note from the major was brought to the Duke while he was dressing. The Duke having glanced at the note threw it into the fire; and the major that evening eat his dinner at the Palliser's Arms Inn at Silverbridge.

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